

“...him that thinketh he standeth...”

In common with others in the ministry, I sometimes ask myself why I carry on. But, like Paul, I know that I carry on not because of success or failure, but simply because God has called me to the task. Even so, it often seems as if I am doing what I do without reason. This is because so long as I say what agrees with the views of my listeners or readers, everything is fine. Mostly we all agree on the same things.

But there comes a time when someone, somewhere, will reject what I say and will do whatever they wish to do, and think what they wish to think. I do not mean that I have made a mistake, or that they have a superior understanding of God's will. No, I am talking about a deliberate rejection of God's word in favour of a personal opinion. It is when this happens that I sometimes wonder why I bother.

In the past I have known almost complete agreement for a long time – but then the person decides that one point of opposition to their favourite view is enough to warrant complete withdrawal from fellowship! That one point seems so important to them (though it cannot be sustained by scripture) they will cast aside years of fellowship. They will doggedly believe in their personalized view though it is shown to be clearly wrong.

It is at that single point that their whole theology falls apart. It is at that juncture that their true (un)Biblical colours are shown. The weakest link has been touched – and the chain they call their 'faith' breaks apart. It is as if their minds and hearts have been waiting in dread for that moment, because once the divergence has been discovered, it provides a key to their whole being.

To put it another way, their faith is based on their own idea of what God says, and not on what scripture says. They cannot tolerate a view that opposes their own, even if it is God's word. So, rather than admit error, they will fight against you and carry on regardless, even if it means losing your fellowship!

I have no doubt at all that Paul must have felt the pain of such deliberate willfulness. This is probably what he is addressing in this chapter. He has taught these men and women himself, and they have been taught by other apostles, too. Yet, here they are doing wrong and

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pretending they did not know.

Paul must have wondered why he bothered in the first place. But, he knew, as I do, that the willfully-wrong personalization of God's word cannot alter the fact that God called him to his ministry. So, he carries on, and re-teaches the Corinthians, telling them things they would probably prefer not to hear. This is the work of all pastors and it is why good pastors do not speak in circles, but speak directly, without ambiguity. What is at stake is truth and real faith, not an income and peer status.

There are some who believe a pastor ought to come down hard on those who refuse to listen and do wrong. I do not think like that. On rare occasions I may have to cast away those whose actions are so open and blatantly sinful as to warrant expulsion. But, those times are very rare. Mainly I can only rebuke and counsel and watch as some cause their own demise. Or, their lives will take a downturn, as their spiritual discernment in a matter is temporarily (or even permanently) clouded.

Should I apply some kind of iron-first? No, I do not think so. Christ has dealt gently with me on many occasions, so why should I do otherwise to my fellows, with whom I share an equally sinful humanity? I cannot force another to comply with God and His word, but can only counsel. If the problem becomes shameful open sin then I must act. If the main problem affects only the sinner, I may only advise and wait for a change of mind and heart. I also think that if we all (saved men and women, that is, with a desire for the truth) treated each other with love instead of with suspicion and anger, then we would all fulfill the command to be as one. (Yes, it can sometimes be very hard to do so).

This, in itself, would produce desired results. But compliance enforced by another Christian, whose own sins are sufficient to keep him or her quiet, is not the answer. A Christian must comply with God's word because he or she wishes to*, and this desire comes from the Holy Spirit, not from us. Without this prompting from the Spirit, any 'desire' is merely an outward show, leaving the heart to hanker after what has been given up. It is therefore not a true change, but one that will only end up in grief or in worse activity. (*Of course, in God's eyes, compliance must be immediate, even if the person has no wish to comply).

Here, we see Paul gently scolding and then reminding his readers of what they ought to do. Even if, as he has threatened, he comes with a rod, it will be a rod of words, not of iron. His threat is of a spiritual and verbal kind, not a physical kind. At one time this man forced people to

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comply with Jewish demands by the application of torture, deprivation and even death.

Now, as a new creature in Christ, his demands are verbal and of the heart. He knows that the only way a man will change is if God Himself moves his heart and mind to do so. No man can effect this. If anything, physical enforcement only serves to strengthen a person's resolve to continue in his sin! Let God deal with it! He will turn a person around in His own good time.

Verses 1-4

1.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

2.

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3.

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4.

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are not alone in their sins (or the remedy), because their forefathers had exactly the same experiences! They, too, sinned. This text again suggests that Paul was writing to Christians who were mainly converted Jews, for the references would not have made much sense to gentiles who lived so far away from Israel. Also, Paul speaks of "all our fathers" and so of a common ancestry.

Paul does not want them to be ignorant, *agnoeo*: or lacking in understanding and knowledge, leading to mistakes. He told them that their forefathers travelled from Egypt ('under the

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cloud...through the sea'). The early Jews were all baptized unto Moses, or made of the same 'colour' or type - **baptizo** as based on **bapto** - by having the same experiences. They all had the same spiritual foundation and teaching (verses 3 & 4).

Of interest to those who think that the 'old dispensation' was different to the 'new', is this statement, that these forefathers, who did not even have a formalized system of rites and sacrifices at the time, "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ". They were protected and believed in the same Rock, **petra**, as we do – Jesus Christ. He accompanied them (followed) and sided with them,

akoloutheo

, and was as one with them ('

a

' or

Alpha

being a particle of union;

keleuthos

meaning a road or way. Thus, both travelled the same road as one).

The ancients did not worship Christ as we do, but their true and genuine worship of Yahweh included Him, for both are One. Paul was showing the Corinthians that their lineage was in both race and spirit. They shared the same faith as their forefathers and the same penchant for sin.

Verses 5&6

1.

"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

2.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."

Though the nation as a whole was chosen by God to bear His special favours, He became very displeased with many of them, which was why they ended up roaming the deserts for 40 years, most dying ('overthrown' – **katastronnumi**, to slay) before entering the Promised Land. This

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was their punishment for disobedience.

What happened to them was an example to us all. We must not 'lust after evil things' as they did. Note that 'examples' or **tupos** are not meant to be just illustrations; they are meant to serve as our pattern or teaching about obedience. In churches everywhere people listen dutifully to their pastor and might even thank him for an 'interesting sermon'.

But, how many then go away and apply what they have heard to their own lives? Very few. The examples of scripture are not just interesting, they are patterns of warning and conformity!

If we do not conform, then we suffer, as I have pointed out so many times before. The basis of this belief is found in the root word of *tupos*, **tupto**, meaning to strike or beat hard, or to wound someone, especially his conscience. Again, note that this occurs mainly in the heart and mind, which has far greater impact than a beating of the body (though God does apply physical punishment at times, as He did in the case of the forefathers).

The 'evil things', **kakos**, Paul refers to are things that are wicked and do us harm. They are 'bad' or of a bad nature and arise out of thoughts, feelings and actions, as well as causing them.

Kakos are, in themselves, destructive and pernicious, having no regard for God or for the person. By judging the people to death, God saved them from possibly years of future earthly destruction. Thus His action against them was both martial and loving.

Strangely, we are all susceptible to 'lust' after these *kakos*. It is strange because we usually know they are dangerous and destructive to us! Yet, we lust,

epithumeo

, after them. We covet and desire them; we look for those things that God has forbidden.

That is, we position ourselves, **epi**, to boil for and be driven by, **thumos**, the things we want! In this there is a willingness, a deliberate wish to have or to do them. This is why I always tell a sinner that he *knows* he is sinning, so there is no excuse and there is no reason why he ought not stop his sin immediately.

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The *only* reason he will not stop, is that he *wishes to remain in his sin*; his desire or lust drives him onward and so he rejects godly counsel with a fierce resolve to sin. This deliberate activity *will*

anger God, Who

must

act against that person. We see the destructive nature of this willfulness in the root of *thumos*,

thuo

– to slay or kill.

This deep-rooted lust for sin shows us why only the Holy Spirit can deflect a person from his sin. God always provides a way out of temptation, so when a person sins, it shows he has succumbed to the evil one and his sin becomes stronger than his will to seek holiness. Only God can overcome that situation! We can counsel, but it is the Spirit Who must do battle in the person's heart and mind.

Verses 7-12

1.

“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it was written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

2.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

3.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

4.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

5.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

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6.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Paul then highlights some of the sins the forefathers were guilty of, warning the Corinthians not to fall to the same evils. Not only that, but they must not desire after them in their hearts and minds. The reason is that though the mind is hidden, it will eventually become reality in a physical sense if it is not dealt with and cut out.

The Corinthians must not desire, or act out, idolatry. There is no point in defining the particular act of idolatry, **eidololatres**, because this term applies to anything that involves the worship of a false god, of any type or creed. Christians are capable of this evil, as we witness amongst those who have turned to charismaticism and have thus turned to heathenism. ALL false religions come into this category.

It also applies to Christians who simply attend the meetings of heathen, and to men who love money as an end in itself. To be an idolater is to serve a false god, **latreuo**, whether fully or partially, or even as an observer in meetings.

Such people ‘sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play’. This can be taken in either a literal or a figurative way, or as both combined. It speaks of people who feast and drink to excess in the company of the godless and end up drunk and fooling about.

Figuratively, it refers to those who sit down – an act of remaining, showing one’s inner beliefs – and join with those who are heathen in beliefs, ‘drinking and eating’ their beliefs and feeding their souls with the poisons they ingest, ending up full of falsity and desiring more. Such ‘play like a child’ at religion, **paizo**. As such, they are **pais**, slaves to a foreign ruler, Satan.

This perfectly fits what happens to Christians who join with charismaticism or ecumenism. They attend meetings out of curiosity though the warning signs are all there; they begin passively, then join in, and then become wholly convinced, **pais**!

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The biggest mistake these people make is that they 'sat down' in the first place. They **kathizo** or tarry; they settle down to take in the scene, thereby proving to Satan and to God that their hearts have wandered into alien territory. Once there, they stay and are overcome. Never sit down, never tarry, when sin presents itself, or you may never return from its grip. Run the other way and do not stop to look back.

The Corinthians were being warned not to join with false teachers. Nor must they commit fornication, **porneuo** – abusing one's body in the pursuit of sexual lust. Note that the definition of a prostitute here is not just to receive payment for sexual acts, but to provide a sexual act to satisfy another's (or even one's own) lust. Thus, anyone who 'lives with' or 'sleeps with' another is a prostitute in God's eyes.

Any sexual activity that is condemned by God is covered by this term, fornication. Therefore, the word that comes from fornication, *porneuo*, and our own word 'pornography', can be defined as *any* sexual activity that God condemns. This is why we cannot define reasonable sexual activities within marriage as '*porneuo* or wrong. The test is whether or not it is said to be wrong by *God*, not by us. Too often, our relationships suffer unnecessarily because of what other human beings say is wrong, and not because of what God says is wrong.

The term can also refer metaphorically to idolatry or to allowing one's self to be drawn into it. This does not appear to be the meaning here, as Paul has already separately mentioned idolatry in the earlier text.

Note that God condemned the ancients in the desert for their illicit sexual activities, and He killed 23,000 of them in just one day, as a punishment to them, and as a warning to us all not to indulge in the same things. *(This killing is found in Numbers 25. you will see that Moses mentions in that book 24,000 and not 23,000. it is generally agreed amongst genuine Bible teachers that these numbers do not necessarily disagree, but are simply different expressions of the same event. That is, the figures are 'about' 23,000 or 24,000. Christ Himself paraphrased the prophets – do we thereby discount what He said? No, we just accept it for what it was, a paraphrase. In this case the paraphrase uses numbers and not words.)*

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Do not suppose that God sleeps or that you can get away with something sinful for years, just because there seems to be no outward condemnation. It could very well be that the very lack of such punishment proves that judgment has already taken place in your life and God has given you over to your sin.

The fact that you boast of your continuance and that God has 'done nothing' proves that He has indeed done something – He has removed His active Presence from your life, as is evidenced in your refusal to obey, and in your lack of conscience. Rather than invite Him to act more physically, possibly even in your death, turn back from your sin and repent, immediately.

The ancients also 'tempted Christ' (another text that proves that the believing ancients were of the same stock as we are, and of the same 'Church'; this does not apply to all of Israel). That is, they maliciously tested Him (God) to the limit. For their presumption they were killed by way of serpents. We find this reference in Numbers 21, verse 6. The ancients turned on Moses, accusing him of bringing them out of Egypt to starve. Obviously, if God tells us to do something, He will not just leave us without defense. In this case, for their testing or fury against God, He sent 'fiery serpents' to fatally bite them. Often, what we call 'natural' death can be a judgment of God. Beware.

In an identical way, the ancients 'murmured', ***gogguzo***: they grumbled secretly together, spreading contention. In a workplace such people can ruin good industrial relationships and bring down morale. The same can happen in a local church, splitting and spoiling the members and making the work of the pastor meaningless.

The ancients spread lies and dissention amongst a whole new nation, and the effects were totally disastrous. God put a stop to it, by sending the 'destroyer'. That is, they were killed by ***ol othreutes***.

Ultimately rooted in

olethros

it means to ruin or put to death for the destruction of the flesh in order to stop earthly lusts. The means are not relevant, because 'death is death'!

You will see that "*all these things happened unto them as ensamples... written for our admonition...*" (verse 11). They are recorded in history for our ***nouthesia***,

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exhortation or understanding. They are not just interesting facts, they are to be used as warnings. God will not tolerate sin in us and so He

must

act against it, whether this is in the form of removing blessings, to removing His active Presence, or to bring death to us in some way. Do not test Him, for such is mockery!

They are facts given to us because *“the ends of the world”* have come to us. That is, we are the ‘end of the line’ of the people of God at the end of all time. We must get it right! For this reason we must take very great care

him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

: *“...let*

(Verse 12).

Many will call to Christ after they have died, “Lord, Lord...”, but He will say “I never knew you”. The thought should terrify anyone of right mind! So, if your belief is only an opinion, look hard at your situation! If you are not properly grounded in solid truth, watch out for your eternal soul! What *you* think is well-established on this earth, will be burned up to nothing when Christ comes again!

Blepo – beware! Do not fall under God’s judgment, but turn back NOW to holiness and purity! This is not a warning to unbelievers but to believers. It is saying that if you are sinning and refusing to stop, then God will judge you in this life. For those who think nothing of their sin, there will come a day of reckoning and they *will* fall. If a Christian knows this he will be afraid and will repent and change. But, if a person says he is saved and is not afraid of such a warning, it proves he is not saved at all.

Verses 13-15

1.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

2.

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

3.

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I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.”

Paul now talks of something that eludes so many Christians, who think that certain temptations can somehow ‘cause’ them to sin. Paul here categorically refuses such a possibility! He tells the Corinthians, and us, that nothing we can ever experience as temptation is unique. There is nothing on this earth that is not common to us all. We can all be tempted to varying degrees, and we can all sin to varying degrees, but sin is sin, and the degree is irrelevant to God.

Though I have written of temptation elsewhere, let me define it in this text. Temptation, **peirasmos**, is how Satan, by God’s command or allowance, tests our resolve to remain holy. On Satan’s part it is an experiment (as the word signifies); it is a trial to see if we buckle under the weight of a suggestion to commit sin. It tests the person’s heart, to see if he will lose his truth, integrity, virtue, love; it tries to get him to sin by tugging at his ‘weak link’, a point at which Satan knows he can possibly fail – because the weakest link in our soul is the strongest. If it cannot tolerate testing at that point, then it will fall.

The trial may also come at us from outside our normal range of ‘besetting sins’, a completely new sensation. Thus, a test comes from outside our experiences thus far. But, it does not matter, for if we are low in our spiritual selves we may buckle after all. The whole point of this trial or temptation is to test whether or not we will remain faithful to God. If we fail, we will sin. If we remain true, then the temptation remains a possibility only and it disappears, at least for a while.

More often than not, temptations are regularly aimed at our weakest link, at something we have succumbed to in the past, because we have failed to deal with it properly before. Or, simply because Satan knows he has been successful at that point, historically. Why use a new strategy if the old ones work well enough? We fall to temptation because we want to, even if we deny it. Before we can fall to temptation we must firstly mentally wish to indulge in that sin, reluctantly or gladly.

But, God is trustworthy and He will not let us be tempted beyond our ability to cope with it (verse 13). This is worth repeating, and it is why I have said that everyone who falls to temptation does so because they want to. Not only does God not tempt us beyond our ability to stand against it,

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but He doubles the insurance by giving us a way to reject the 'offer' made by temptation. He will "*make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear*". Nothing can be clearer than that! Will you escape, or stay to sin?

The 'way of escape', **ekbasis**, is the way out, to make an end. God wants us to use that way out, so that our faith remains intact and we become all the stronger in the process. The wisest thing a Christian can do, then, is to admit to wanting to sin when he has fallen to temptation. Only then can he treat his sin with contempt and turn back in repentance. If, however, he thinks he is a 'victim' he will fall time and again, believing himself to be wretched and yet unable to respond to God. Of course he can!

This particular text is a reference to fleeing from the temptation to commit idolatry, but the principle is universal and applies to all kinds of temptation to do wrong. Paul speaks, he says, to 'wise men', so his words must be weighed as such to see if they make sense. How could they be 'wise' when they were doing such sinful things? The word 'wise', **phronimos**, means intelligent and being careful for one's interest, involving the faculty of understanding, **phren**

. Though we may sin, it does not mean we are not intelligent or that we are unable to weigh up important matters. It has a basic meaning of curbing one's self – an ability all Christians have from God.

Verse 16-22

1.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

2.

For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

3.

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

4.

What say I then? That the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any

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thing?

5.

But I say, that the things which the gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

6.

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of the devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

7.

Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"

The 'cup of blessing' is a reference to communion, of which all were familiar. The 'blessing' means 'of Christ and praiseworthy', a consecration of benefit. It is the 'communion of the blood of Christ', or the participation in His sacrifice in that we share the blessings that come from it – which is why we praise it. And the bread is the body of Christ, with an indirect reference to His Body the Church, a symbol of His living self (verse 16 & 17).

Though there are many Christians, we are all of 'one bread' or substance/body, with Christ. We are 'as one' because we share the same body. This is why we ought to look after each other, even if we think some are doing wrong. If we cast someone aside for a non-disfellowshipping sin, then we harm our own Body; we must not divide from brethren for minor causes. Also, if we sin without remorse or repentance, we harm the Body with evil. We must watch out and beware.

'Look at the nation of Israel,' says Paul. 'Are not the priests sharing the sacrifices? So, if they share with idols, they sin. But, am I saying that idols are notable and of some value? Am I saying that sacrifices made to them are worthy? I say that when the gentiles sacrifice to their gods, they actually sacrifice to devils and not to God. Therefore, I say you must not join with them.' Paul is, then, winding up a long explanation as to why the Corinthians ought not join with heathen worship in any form.

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You cannot, he says, join with God and with devils at the same time. After all, devils, **daimonio**
n, are inferior to God. Though superior to men they act with malice and against God, being ministers of Satan. That is why we cannot join with communion as well as with heathen at worship.

By doing so we may 'provoke the Lord to jealousy', or, provoke him to anger, **parazello**, by setting up a supposed rival, even though that rival is without substance. To do this we must surely think we are more powerful than God! But, we are not, so God forbid that we should pour such contempt upon Him by joining with heathen worship and inviting His wrath! ('Heathen' can include false churches and brethren).

Verses 23-26

1.

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

2.

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

3.

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

4.

For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

Paul has previously told his readers that all things are lawful for him but they are not always useful or spiritually profitable. He does not mean that everything is of God. 'All things' means 'many things'. There are many things in life that God does not condemn but which, as part of a Christian life, have no real benefit.

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For example, God does not condemn sport, but if a man spends his entire life at that sport and leaves aside prayers and studies and meditation of God's word, then the sport is not edifying to him. Anything that in itself is lawful but which takes away our time with God, is not edifying.

For this reason we should not live solely for our own benefit, but should look out for the well-being of others, whoever they are. And whatever is sold in the market, we may eat it without feeling guilty, because meat is of God's goodness. If men turn it into something less, then that is their problem, not ours. So long as we do not sit at table whilst the host sacrifices and blesses it to a false god, we may eat in good faith.

We can also apply this principle to what people teach, which is why we may not enter and stay in a meeting held by false teachers. Nor may we accept heresy from the lips of men in our pulpits, or in books. If we listen or read without criticism then we join with them and stand guilty.

Verses 27-30

1.

"If any of them that believe not bid you to feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

2.

But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

3.

Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?

4.

For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?"

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This means that even if we are invited to a lunch, or dinner (feast), or function held by an unbeliever, we may attend without feeling guilty. After all, so did Christ. We may eat whatever is given to us. (I am not talking about 'parties' or clubs!). But, if the host tells us the food is being offered to a false god, we should not eat, explaining to the host why we may not do so. We must refuse for the sake of the host, not for our own sake, for we already know that false gods are nothing and have no power. This may cause the host to think again and to consider what we say about the true God.

The host, or any unsaved person, cannot alter what is true or real. He cannot cause us to be unsaved and cannot condemn us for our faith, for it is real. But, we might just affect the heart of the unsaved, by God's grace, by accepting his offer of a social gathering but not accepting anything that is offered to false gods, or involving sin.

This also teaches us that Christians may attend functions or gatherings with unbelievers, so long as we do not join with anything that is to do with false gods, false religion, or sin. When asked why we cannot join in that part, we respectfully explain and leave it at that. What this shows is that we can experience everyday life amongst the unsaved, so long as we do not join with any false beliefs they may have.

The belief that some have, of total exclusion, is not of God and cannot be shown from scripture. The only time we may cut ourselves off from unbelievers is if they are outrageously sinful or if they expect us to join with them in false worship or sin. The rest of the time they should be treated with respect, as we ourselves wish to be treated. After all, until we were saved, we were just like them!

If, says Paul, I enjoy a social gathering at which I thank God for His food and provision, why should anyone else charge me with heresy or sin? I have joined the gathering in good faith, with my beliefs and actions intact, holy and pure, so why should anyone else think I am being unholy? It is *my* heart that matters, not the heart of those I meet with!

Verses 31-33

1.

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to glory of God.

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2.

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

3.

Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.”

It seems that some Corinthians were back-stabbing their fellow believers for going to feasts held by unbelievers, charging them with being idolaters when they ate food given by their host. Paul rejects all this, saying that if the heart of the Believers remain holy, there is no charge to bring against them.

We may, he says, eat, drink or do anything else with unbelievers, so long as we do it all to God's glory. That is, we praise God and not any false god. Paul says we must not unduly offend an unbeliever, whether Jew, Gentile or fellow Christian, in the normal course of everyday life. Instead, we must treat all men of all and any religion, with respect (but not what they believe). That is, simply as fellow human beings.

Paul himself tried to please everyone as much as he could. 'Please' is *aresko*, meaning to try to fit in with someone else's life, desires and interests. He would not join in with their religious observances or sins, but he certainly joined them in everyday life. This is really what is meant by being in this world but not of it.

Of course, if someone practiced sin openly he could not join with them. Paul joined everyday life in every place he went. Not that he was talking about being invited – that is, *occasionally* meeting with the unsaved in a social setting. (Shopping and working and so on, are not a social setting).

He did this because he thought highly of every person he met, not “*seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved*”

1 Corinthians 10

Written by K B Napier

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. Paul was always ready to help others and joined with them in everyday living, no matter who they were. He did it because he had their best interests at heart and wished for them to be saved. How could he preach the Gospel to men and women if he always got their backs up, or hated them, or completely shunned them?

This is a salutary lesson to us all, for many of us tend to avoid the unsaved in everyday life. Paul is telling us that we should not do this, but must live by example and take opportunity if it arises to tell others of the Gospel. We cannot do this if we are nowhere near them! Nor can we do so if we hate them or keep clear of them at all times. The man who tries to avoid all the unsaved is very unsure of his own responses and faith, for as Paul says, why should he fear if his heart is right before God?

Note: In my own life I will commune with all kinds of people. I will treat them kindly in a work situation and manage them all on an equal basis, even those who I know have sinful lives. But, I never attend their social functions because I know they will smoke, drink, and become unsavoury. On one occasion, as a manager I was asked to attend a worker's evening wedding feast. This I did, causing much excitement for him, that 'the boss' came! However, I stayed a short while so as not to be involved in any drunkenness of guests later. On the other hand, my wife annually attended a festive meal at a restaurant, with her colleagues. But, she never indulged in the same drinking to excess, and always came home at a reasonable time, to avoid being a part of excessive activities. With both of us, everyone knew why we acted as we did, and so no-one felt aggrieved.

I will also communicate happily with all manner of people, including unbelievers, and discuss things openly. I always start with the parameters I observe, and stop the discussion if I see no point to it. And I do not counsel an unbeliever; I can only advise generally, and within certain limits.

In terms of spiritual things, though, I never attend supposed 'worship' at a false church; I will never discuss heresy as if it were true; I will never join with those I know to be committing open sin – unless my aim is to warn them, expecting change. Nor would I remain at the side of people who are cursing, swapping 'blue' jokes, or otherwise being sinful towards others or God.

Perhaps you can see how we ought to be, from the above examples.

1 Corinthians 10

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