

1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1

Introduction

In this section Paul returns to the matter of meat offered to idols. But he introduces a new motive to guide our conduct, and draws out its implications. If you understand what you are doing at the Lord's Table, it will influence your conduct for the whole of the week which follows. It underlines your responsibility to God and to fellow believers.

Going to consider motives for Christian conduct, not only what we must do but also why we must do it. Highest constraints are on us to direct our lives in a certain way.

Duty to be loyal to the Lord

Paul still has on his mind the problem which those Corinthians were caught up in. Could they eat meat offered to idols? The answer - if you know it was offered to idols, abstain, because you are setting bad example to fellows and may be a stumbling block, even though idols mean nothing.

Now he gives a further reason. Though idols have nothing behind them, there are powers of darkness, the devils and demons, sinister evil forces behind idolatry, that is devilish and satanic. And if you join in idol feasts, you are worshipping them and joining in homage and service to them. You cannot go to the Lord's Table and have communion with the Lord, and the next minute go to an idol feast and have communion with Satan.

When you take the bread and wine, which signifies His body and blood, you commune by faith with the Lord. You commune with Him in various ways, e.g. prayerfully reading the Bible, seeking Him in prayer. As you eat the bread and think on His body and what happened to it for salvation, and think of His precious blood – life given in death – that sin might be cleansed and we be accepted by God, the visible symbols bring these things home to us. We receive again assurance of forgiveness of the sins on our conscience. He wants us to remember Him in this way. He has given us this ordinance. So we are especially conscious of Him and gratefully have fellowship with Him as we draw near in gratitude, worship and faith. Now you cannot then go out to a heathen temple and commune with Satan and the demons.

This is a very important aspect of the Lord's Table, for it influences our conduct in a very fundamental way. It involves communion with the Lord. We belong to Him. We are part of His covenant people. He is our God, and we are His people (Jeremiah 31:33) We are his and we cannot belong to anyone else. By his covenant, he claims us for his own. When we bow our heads at the Lord's Table, what do we do, and think about, and pray? Do we not remember Christ's death for our sins? What has that done? It has brought us into a covenant with God. He gives Himself to us and we give ourselves to Him. So what does that mean? At the Table we remember He is ours and we are His, and therefore we should give ourselves back to Him.

And that should have deep and constraining influence on our conduct. As one of the Lord's people, we have remembered that and professed that at the Table, and we must remember it in all our choices, temptations and decisions.

Often at the Lord's Table we pray, "As we live our lives in the world this week among fellow men, let us keep in mind what we publicly professed last Sunday at the Lord's Table."? The Lord's Table reaffirms our loyalty to the Lord. It separates us from sin and the world and evil and satanic influences. We cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.

Bonnie Prince Charlie, in flight from the English army, took refuge with eight men of Glenmoriston. The price of £30,000 was on his head, and they did not have a shilling among them. But no one betrayed him. Years after, when the 1745 rebellion was only an unhappy memory, one of the eight, Hugh Chisholm, was in Edinburgh. Many spoke to him about his adventures with the Prince. He insisted on shaking hands with the left hand. The explanation was that when Prince Charlie left them, he shook hands with them. And Chisholm swore he would never again give to any man the hand he had given to his prince.

Those who have handled sacred things of Christ cannot soil hands with evil and unworthiness.

#### Duty to be true to God's People

Not only loyal to the Lord, but to His people. We are not just individuals, but part of His people – this too is remembered at the Table. Paul still has on his mind the problem of food offered to idols. He returns to the point mentioned earlier. Food offered to idols does not only involve worship of demons, but causes weak Christians to fall and hinders their Christian progress. If you do go to a meal, don't be over-fussy and keep asking if this meat was offered at an idol temple. Eat up and enjoy the food. But if someone definitely tells you that it was used in idol worship, don't eat it, for the sake of the weaker brother (1 Corinthians 10:27,28).

We must remember not to use our Christian freedom to shock or hurt others, but to help them. We must not give offence, and not seek our own good but that of others. Paul strengthens the argument with another aspect from the Lord's Table. There is one loaf at the Table. **We, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of one loaf** (1 Corinthians 10:17). So at the Lord's Table, we are not only in fellowship with the Lord, but also with one another. Symbol of unity through one loaf. This provides another reason why we must be careful how we live. We are being watched. Other Christians take their cue from us, and follow our example. What we say, or what we do not say; what we do or do not do; the things we encourage and the things we don't. Does our influence point to Christ, or away from Him?

We are wielding influence for or against the Lord, and therefore helping or hindering fellow Christians. The Lord's Supper reminds us of our duty to other Christians. We are one with them. It is not an ordinance for the individual. "When you come together..." comes five times later in the epistle. N.B. there is no objection to taking communion to the sick in their home, as long as no superstitious motive behind the

request. But it must always be done with an office bearer or church member, who is a representative of the whole congregation.

This reminds us of the suitability of closing a communion service with a prayer for the church. So here we have a very practical bearing of the Lord's Supper on our life. Be loyal to the Lord and true to God's people. We are in covenant with the Lord and in covenant with His people.

### Supreme motive for all actions

**So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do not, do it all for the glory of the Lord** (1 Corinthians 10:31). What a common phrase and how glibly we use it. We hear it in testimonies, prayers and sermons. It is a phrase which can mean a great deal, or nothing at all. It takes us to the very reason for which we were made. We were created and placed on earth that the glory might be brought to God. We were redeemed and recreated, not for our own good and comfort, but for God's honour and glory. His name is lifted high, praised, worshipped, known and exalted.

This was the supreme motive of the Lord's life. **I have glorified you on the earth** (John 17:4). Likewise the supreme motive of our lives must be glory to Him in everything. What is man's chief end? "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

Here is the test for all our actions. Can I do this for God's glory? Will it draw attention to Him? Cause people to think of Him? Admire Him? Look at Him? This is the very reverse of what we are by nature. Usually we want to bring attention to ourselves, to cause people to speak well of us, to admire us.

George Muller was a man who truly died to self, to his own opinions and his own will. When a pamphlet was written about his remarkable life, the answers to his prayers, and his work in the orphanages, he was terrified lest the account might turn men's eyes from the master workman to the human instrument. In all our choices – profession, time, conduct, decisions, bearing suffering and sickness – will it show men what a wonderful and glorious and gracious God He is? We exist above all, not to please friends, family or selves, but God.

### Conclusion

The Lord's Supper provides us with a strong motive for Christian conduct. Loyalty to the Lord and responsibility to others. Then the supreme motive – **O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together** (Psalm 34:3).