

This final part of chapter ten basically covers just one principle with several illustrations given to make it as clear as possible; and that principle is this: When we make decisions about the things we do, especially in relation to service to the Lord and our relationship to those in the Church, we should always begin by considering how whatever we decide to do will affect others and how it affects our testimony before the Lord. How it affects *us* has to be the *last* thing on our minds not the first; which, of course, is the opposite of the way the world thinks.

Paul begins with a warning which is capstoned in vs. 20; “. . . do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than Him?” What the Corinthians were doing, without realizing it, was offering service to the Lord while, at the same time, fellowshiping with demons. So, what *exactly* were the Corinthians doing that tied taking communion into fellowship with demons?

(vs's 14-21) Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 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? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

It may be hard for us to imagine, but the Corinthians didn't have a problem with assembling on Sunday to observe communion and then during the week, taking part in occult idolatry. Zodhiates explains it like this:

There are substances that naturally do not mix. Oil, for instance, does not blend with water. As there are things that do not mix physically, so there are spiritual things that, by the nature of their being, cannot be mixed. Among

these are idolatry and Christianity....How can two antithetical spiritual forces sit in fellowship together?

You (absolutely) cannot (present tense- continually) drink the cup of the Lord (kurios) and the cup of demons- Note that Paul is not describing a believer who is simply attending an idol feast, but one who is making a choice to actively participate. The tragedy is he also continues to actively participate in the Lord's Supper! In short Paul is addressing one who has made it a practice to go to both the communion service and the table of demons. Some of the believers in Corinth were mixing fellowship with God and fellowship with demons, but they absolutely do not mix and the believer must flee idolatry.

Paul is referring to the born-again Christian who knows what he is doing when he drinks the cup that represents Christ's blood and when he eats the bread that represents the body of Christ on the cross. Such a born-again believer, partaking of the communion service, cannot also partake on a consistent, regular basis, of the cup of demons. No one can worship both the true God and demons.

Paul follows what we've just seen as a warning by driving home the principle we looked at when we began: What is the affect that our decisions will have on other Christians and on our relationship with the Lord? Vs's 23-33:

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness."

If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Because of what we became at the fall, it's not natural or us to "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being." We have to fight against our emotions and selfishness to obey an exhortation like that. This is a huge part of the constant battle we are in, and it *will be* until our flesh is removed at the rapture.

Never deceive yourself into thinking you're being hypocritical by acting *against* your inclinations, as if those inclinations define you and are some kind of measurement of how far you *haven't gone* in conformity to Christ. Satan always points to the impulses of our flesh as proof of our carnality. But the Lord knows that what we really are is what we decide to do, not what the flesh is in us.

Paul made that discovery and told us about it in Roman's 7;

(Rom. 7:16-18) If, then, I am doing what my will tells me *not* to do . . . it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells . . . But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.

Paul is not being hypocritical or copping out by blaming his flesh for his sinful desires; he's acknowledging reality. When we are born again, we have a split personality, that's real. We have the flesh that seeks its own and always will; and we have Christ being formed in us motivating our will to make the right decisions in spite of how we might feel about it.

And as the rest of our passage in 1 Cor. tells us – our lives are no longer an issue of what is or is not "legal" or "lawful". We're no longer under Law but under Grace. Vs. 23, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify." In our context, as related to eating meat sacrifices to idols, meat is just meat. You can eat meat no matter where it came from, but make sure whatever decision you make is "helpful" and "edifying" rather than harmful or stumbling to someone else; someone like a younger believer who is "weak" in his understanding of these things.

(Rom. 14:1-3) Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

And this principle applies to everything we do – Paul gives another example in Rom. 14:5-6:

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

If we understand what it means to live in Grace rather than by rules and regulations imposed by Law, we won't be looking for rules, we'll be trying to find out what would be in the best interest of those around us. That's why Paul sums it up like this is Gal. 5:13-14 (I'm going to paraphrase these verses to show their tie-in to 1 Corinthians):

You, brethren, have been called to freedom; only do not use freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For everything the Law has ever required is fulfilled in this: "You shall love your neighbor . . . "

And in Rom. 13:10, we see this: "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the Law ."

Anyone, in any circumstance, who makes their behavioral decisions out from a motive of love and an understanding of what would be in the best interest of those around him, needs no Law to guide him.

Paul's summary of this principle is in 1 Cor. 10:31-33;

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, *not* seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

In everything Paul said, that is the one thing he wanted most to communicate to the self-centered Corinthians.

The Christian life, when lived under the freedom of Grace, is, at least in concept, simple. You don't need a thousand rules and regulations to strive to obey throughout each day, you just need to love God and love others. Those are the two greatest commandments for a reason – they are all we need.

With or without emotion, love is a decision. I can love someone whose personality I can't stand - just like Jesus did when He called the Pharisees vipers and then died for them.

So, what we have seen in 1 Cor. 10 has been practical advice targeting an audience that should have already known these things. And it's a good reminder to us, both in specifics and in principle, of what should govern our relationships.

Now, I want to switch gears for the rest of our study and look at something that's been weighing on me for quite awhile.

The more I read of what Paul and others wrote, the more I realize that our spiritual survival here depends, more than anything else, on *not* living here; even in our "Christianity".

(Heb. 11:9-10) By faith (Abraham) made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Abraham's crowning victory in life was when he finally stopped looking at the tents he was living in and saw the city that was to come. And that's why Paul wrote this in Col. 3:1-4;

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with

Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

We died to this world; we are *not* of this world, so why do we *focus* on this world?

(2 Cor. 4:16-17) We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

That which is *not* seen (except by faith) is the only thing with eternal substance; it's the only rock we can build our lives on that will sustain us in the storms that rage against us.

(Matt. 7:24-27) Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.

(Heb. 11:36-40) Others had trial of mocking and scourging, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not experience the promise, God having provided something better for us . .

(Eccl. 1:1-8) The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow

again. All things are full of weariness; all words are feeble; man cannot utter it.

(Job 5:7-8) Man is born to trouble; as the sparks fly upward. But as for me, I would seek God, and to Him I would commit my cause . . .

(John 15:19) You are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of this world . . .

We are to live in the light of the eternal purpose of God, not reduce that purpose to various projects meant to be undertaken by religious Christians.

For example; some churches take the “Great Commission” as the answer to why we are here. They say that this is our “purpose”. But that Commission is meant to bring those who are lost *into* God’s purpose, not *become* His purpose. The Commission is one of the means God has chosen to use to *initiate* His purpose in this Age, but we haven’t fulfilled God’s purpose by getting saved. Salvation places us at the beginning of our race, not at the end.

Other churches focus more on programs designed to serve believers, to meet the needs of God’s people. They focus on the “family” social structure that exemplifies our unity and interdependence. Like the “evangelistic” churches, these churches are doing a very important thing, but they run the risk of becoming man-centered instead of Christ-centered. We end up doing things *for* Him and others, but they aren’t done *by* Him.

The best way to understand what some people call “the meaning of life” is to get an eternal perspective. Imagine you’re an architect who’s planning to design and build something. Architects usually have the end result in mind before they begin so they’ll know exactly what steps to take to make that happen.

There is a consistent principle flowing throughout the scriptures that shows that before God created He had an endgame. He knew what He wanted and He knew what it would take to get there. It was a plan that was made in eternity past in the council of the Godhead about what creation would be, and what it would look like when it was completed.

The Scriptures allow us to understand what has been in the heart of God from before creation. When we look at the end of the last book in the Bible and the

beginning of the first book, we can see what all of this has been about, what it's all been leading to, and that allows us to better understand why we are going through what we are going through, and also to understand where we fit into God's ultimate purpose.

The Christian who understands these things will be able to walk in the light and will also be able to be a co-laborer with God in playing the part we are meant to play in the Age of the Church.

One of the main reasons the Church in our generation is split into a thousand denominations with competing doctrinal statements and confusion is because, as Prov. 29:18 tells us, "Where there is no vision, the people perish (lit. "disintegrate" or "break into pieces") . . ." Since there is very little understanding of the Bible as a whole, and even less understanding of why we are here, there's no unifying vision holding all of us together.

The "why we are here" question is not being answered by a clear, comprehensive knowledge of God's ultimate purpose in Creation, and an equally clear explanation of where the Church fits into that purpose; instead, that purpose has been broken down into things that are only parts or pieces of the purpose, but those parts are seen as the whole – so, we can't see the forest for the trees. Each division in the Body of Christ rallies around part of the purpose, rather than around the full purpose itself.

As we've seen before, the true purpose of all creation is the ultimate formation of a corporate Person, not a mission, or a program, or a five-year plan.

T. Austin Sparks puts it like this;

Do not think that by any method of reasoning, you are ever going to reach God's thoughts, God's standard. You never will. It is only by revelation of the Holy Spirit. Christ has got to be revealed in our hearts by the Spirit. There is no point in Jesus saying: "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth," if we could get there by our own intelligence. Not at all. It must come by the revelation of Christ in our hearts, in the inward parts. This is something spiritual. "God is Spirit; they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"- spirit and truth go together. Only that which is spiritual, is truth.

A man's thoughts may or may not match God's on the level of accuracy, but the reality *behind* what God desires to communicate to us goes much deeper than the statement itself, and until we plumb *those* depths, we haven't arrived at Truth, at spiritual reality. This is why we see verses like this in Ephesians;

(Eph. 3:14-19) I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that . . . you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height (and watch this next phrase) and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Without revelation of the Spirit, it's impossible for the human intellect to obtain knowledge that "passes knowledge"; let alone be filled with all the fullness of God.

By coming to lead us into all Truth, the Holy Spirit never intended to communicate to us through sermons and books alone. He has something much greater than academic education in mind; something that the circumstances of life He brings us into will be used to accomplish by taking what we learn and infusing it into our character and comprehension through the trials and experiences of life.

So, again, The Holy Spirit desires to lead us into the Truth, which is more than education, even solid education – Truth is absolute reality, full reality in Christ.

The Spirit will use the written word to reveal the Living Word to us. His goal is not simply that we know correct doctrine *about* Christ and stop there – that's only a stepping stone to knowing, by spiritual revelation, the One Who *is* "The Truth".

A dedicated intellectual, if he's open and honest in his research, can become an accurate interpreter of Bible doctrine; but the mind is not the spirit. Our mind can gain from what the spirit sees, but it can never discover Truth on its own. That's why, for example, the majority of the contemporary prophecy experts limit their podcasts to visible events; they don't talk about the spiritual realities of the Church because they are using intellect plus observation to decide what to focus on.

They are using their mind, not their human spirit. But the "Truth" (full reality) occurs only through Spirit-to-spirit communication (Holy Spirit to the human spirit). Intellectual Christians can't hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches which, by the way, the Lord made it clear in Revelation chapters 2 & 3, that this was the

single most important thing for God's people in every generation; it's the only phrase the Lord repeated in every one of the seven letters in those chapters.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying (present tense) to the churches"

We may be able to "observe" the signs of the Second Coming, but to know the Truth, the Reality, about the current spiritual condition of the World and the Church requires more than observation.

Whatever is hidden in the spiritual realm, or comes under the category of the wisdom of God, the deep things of God, can't be known by anyone apart from spiritual revelation. As Watchman Nee put it;

The testimony of the apostle John is confined to the Holiest of All—it is full of spiritual reality. He never touches on outward things but is always speaking about that which is inward, that is to say, in the depths. Hence the word "life" is seen a great deal in both his Gospel, his letters, and the book of Revelation. The primary characteristic of his ministry is that of recovery after there has been a general falling away or spiritual declension. For at the time he wrote his letters, his Gospel, and Revelation, apostasy had become quite prevailing. In view of this state of affairs, John stepped forward and spoke on the true, inner reality of things: which is life. John's testimony is therefore concerned with leading God's people to the innermost recesses to discover what an incredible God they really have.

We are now living in a Corinthian-like generation. There is a massive amount of Christian activity being performed, and information being disseminated, but there is a near total famine of *hearing* the Word of the Lord.

(Amos 8:11-12 Amplified) The days are coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but [a famine] for hearing the words of the Lord. And [the people] shall wander from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord [inquiring for and requiring it as one requires food], but shall not find it.

One of the reasons I wanted to make sure we included these principles in our study relates directly to our time in history. Of all the generations in the Church Age, ours

is the most susceptible to deception. There are more warnings about being deceived in the final generation of the Church than about any other single danger we face.

And the primary characteristic of this final, global deception, is founded on the fact that 21st. century Christianity is a religion of the mind, the intellect and the emotions. The whole realm of spiritual understanding has been set aside in favor of what is listened to, what is seen and what is felt. Churches are either intellectual and doctrinally focused, or they are emotional and busy; or some combination of the two.

I am not doubting anyone's sincerity or commitment; and many of the contemporary pastors are genuinely compassionate, committed men; but deception isn't overcome by sincerity. There is only one way to be absolutely safe from the kind of deception that has swept millions of believers into the apostasy Paul warned of in this final generation, and that is through spiritual revelation of the Truth.

If we listen to our spirit as it communions with the Holy Spirit, we can see what our natural senses and abilities *can't* see. Or we can live by those natural abilities and never tap into the incredible thing that has happened to us at our new birth.

This has to become a very heart-felt and constant prayer of our own – “Lord, please show us what we haven't seen; reveal more and more of Yourself to us so that our lives will be lived in genuine spiritual understanding- for your glory.”

This life is only training and preparation for the life to come – this is the shadow; the full reality awaits the return of our Lord. Those who's hope and hearts are set on the Father's love for all of His prodigal sons will experience His full embrace even before they can speak.

Carry that with you and you will understand the purpose behind the “momentary light affliction” of the storms of this temporal life. I'm going to re-read 2 Cor. 4:17-18, but this time from the Amplified Version:

Our light, momentary affliction (the distress of this passing hour) is ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for us an everlasting weight of glory [beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and

blessedness never to cease!] (So,) we consider not the things that are seen but the things that are unseen; for the things that are visible are (brief and fleeting), but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting.

For Christians in this final generation who believe what I've just said in this study, God is literally working all things together for the ultimate good, for the completion of *His* eternal purpose - and for us as those who are to share in the glory of that purpose.

Listen to these comments by Eric Sauer;

The goal of God in the present period of the creation is the creation of the Ecclesia (the spiritually and numerically completed corporate Body of Christ). The widening of the circumference of salvation proceeds to its world-embracing goal. In the perfected state there will be a new heaven and a new earth, a transfigured universe, with the heavenly city of God, the New Jerusalem, on the new earth. Also, we can observe the developments within the creation proving that the business of the Lord is a triumphant victorious progress, bringing about not only the self-revelation of God, but also the history of the redemption of the creature, and thus, both the historical, temporal and the eternal all testify in common that the kingdom of God will triumph, that no power in heaven or on earth can annul God's counsel of full salvation and that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. The triumph of the kingdom of God will work out in finality to a spiritual body. After world destruction, the transforming of the universe and descent of the heavenly city of God, we will see the perfected victory of the affairs of the Lord.

(1 Cor. 15:50-58) Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a hidden mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. When this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your sting?

Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast and immovable . . .

Thus, the whole history of creation from eternity to eternity is a witness of Divine power, as a spur to a joyous confidence of faith, as the expectation of a blessed perfecting and, once again, it declares that ‘our faith is the victory that has overcome the world.’

I’ll close with a verse that came to mind when I finished reading Sauer’s comments. It’s in Psalm 118:23; “This is the Lord’s doing; and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

Whether as individuals looking at our personal lives and circumstances, or whether we are talking about the Church corporate as an organization, we spend most of our time focused on what we are going through and on what we should be doing rather than on *why* we are going through these things.

What we are going through is extremely painful, but it is temporary; the reason behind all of this is encouraging, even glorious, and it is eternal. Our *circumstances* are seen by our natural senses, the “why” is seen only by faith. Paul says that we are to “walk by faith, not by sight” if we desire to build the house of our soul on the stability of an immovable Rock.

Without an eternal perspective becoming increasingly natural and spontaneous for us, the temporal perspective that the world (and most of the Church) lives in, will crush us. This is why, in Lk. 18:7-8, Jesus said concerning our time in history,

Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him . . . I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Not “Will He find perfection?” or “Will he find super-saints?”, but will He find anyone, even if only those of “little strength”, still holding onto faith in Him and longing for His return. It will be the “cry of the elect” that moves our Lord from heaven to rescue us; just as the cry of Israel in Egypt moved Jehovah to deliver them.

(1 Thess. 4:16-18) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.