

This section of Paul's letter to the Corinthians has to do with the fellowship we have with God, and each other, and how we are to partake of that fellowship. Two key thoughts:

1. All things are lawful for those in the Body of Christ.
2. We are to do all to the glory of God.

If we keep these two things in mind, we will enjoy sweet communion with God and with our church body. Paul begins in verse 16 by making the point that when we come together in one body, we are coming together as the body of Christ.

Verse 16—

In previous verses, Paul gave illustrations regarding idolatry (vs. 14) from the Old Testament. We saw Israel had a preoccupation with idols, food, and play (vs. 7). Paul said that Israel's failures are an example for us. We in the Body of Christ are not immune to failure. He concludes that discussion and implores his readers to judge what he is about to say (vs. 15). What constitutes fellowship with the Lord?

He mentions **The cup of blessing**. This must refer to the cup of wine we drink at the communion (fellowship) service. The communion service is a picture of the Body of Christ, fellowshiping as one with Him. The wine is a symbol of Christ's blood, and the **bread which we break** is an image of His body. When we partake, we are identifying ourselves as being part of the Body of Christ. We are showing that we are aligned with Christ as one. And, we are to *come together* to have communion (1 Cor. 11:33).

We are to *judge* (vs. 15) what Paul says about the communion service. I think **judge** here means to *resolve to do what I am about to tell you*. Notice that the cup is the **communion of the blood** and the bread is the **communion of the body of Christ**. They are not the actual blood or the literal body. They represent a *fellowship* and only that.

The Roman Catholic view of communion is that the wine and bread are the actual blood and body, a view called transubstantiation. Paul says it's not the *reality* but the *fellowship*. Neither is there a spiritual presence in the wine or the bread. No presence of Jesus Christ exists in the wine or the bread whatsoever.

The Greek word is *koinonia*, which translates as *fellowship* 12 times in the KJV. The Young's Literal Translation indeed translates it as *fellowship* in this passage. ESV says *participation in the blood of Christ*, which is a poor translation. The cup and the bread are only *fellowship* and to that Paul says if you are wise, you will judge (resolve to do) the point he is making.

Verse 17—

Many are one bread,...one body. Even though there are many different people within the local church, we are all part of (One in) Christ. **Partakers** as the body of Christ, the bread of the

communion, shows us Christ's body, which was for us, but also that we are part of that body—each of us has a part of the body of Christ (a point he makes clear in chapter 12).

Verse 18—

Behold (Literally, Take heed regarding) **Israel after the flesh**. When the nation of Israel offered a sacrifice on the altar in the Temple (in Jerusalem) and the sacrifice was eaten by the priests and family members, they themselves did not receive forgiveness because they are eating it. And while they were aligning themselves with that sacrifice even though they themselves did not present it, it represented something holy to them. In the same way, Christ is the one who presented his body as the sacrifice, and yet we partake of his sacrifice.

There is fellowship in the symbol of the sacrifice, not partaking of the elements themselves.

Verse 19—

Returning to the discussion of idols: His point is going to show the contrast between the bread and the cup, the sacrifices the Jews made on the altar, to that of idols.

1. The cup and the bread of communion is something: The representation of the Body of Christ.
2. The sacrifices on the altar are something: The representation of the real sins of the people.
3. But since idols are nothing (1 Corinthians 8:4), what does anything offered to an idol represent?

A rhetorical question, which (perhaps) always is answered "No."

Is the idol, or the sacrifice offered to an idol anything? "No."

The spirit behind our communion is the Lord Jesus Christ; the spirit behind Israel's sacrifices is the holiness of God.

But what about the spirit behind sacrificing to idols, since Idols are just wood and stone?

Verse 20—

They sacrifice to devils, and not to God. Who are those who sacrifice to idols really sacrificing to?

Idol worship was rampant in Corinth, and Christians were confused about how far their freedom in Christ allowed them to go. And, since idols have no real existence, believers have substantial freedom in eating food sacrificed to idols. But to weak believers, idols represent a reality.

I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. This aligns with Paul's previous emphasis (chapter 8) that believers should not eat meat offered to Gentile idols (the Jews had none), even

though they have the freedom to do so because they would cause the Jewish unbeliever to run from Christianity rather than toward it.

Verse 21, 22--

Believers cannot have it both ways. **Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils.**

Paul asks two rhetorical questions:

1. If we were to participate in a Gentile sacrifice (I think he means eating something sacrificed to an idol), would it provide the Lord to jealousy? The answer to this question is again, "No," which he will qualify in verse 23.
2. Are we stronger than God? Are we immune to temptations? The answer is, "No."

Verse 23—

Eating meat offered to idols will not provoke the Lord to jealousy. Why? Because we live in the dispensation of grace. Yet, Paul elaborates, while **all things are lawful...all things are not expedient**, nor do all things **edify** or build up. We have complete liberty in Christ, but we have to exercise that freedom responsibly to ensure others are built up, not causing others to stumble if they are weak in their Christian faith.

Note from [1 Corinthians 8:9](#):

-But take heed. This freedom or liberty that we have comes with a warning. **Lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.** Not only do the apostles have freedom, but so do the Corinthians; they too have liberty. It is the strong or mature believer who can eat the meat sacrificed to idols. It is the weak believer who has a bad conscience for doing so. But the mature is not to cause the weak to stumble.

Note from [1 Corinthians 6:12](#):

All things are lawful. What is permissible for a Christian? All things. This certainly cannot mean *all things*, can it? And yet, that is what Paul states. In other words, our salvation is not dependent on what we do. Remember the list in the previous verses? Doing any of those things will not keep a person out of heaven.

But, Paul continues, **all things are not expedient**, meaning some things will cause a considerable burden, so they are not profitable. They will not keep you out of heaven, but they will not bring any return on investment. The time spent doing certain things will not result in anything positive; they are a waste of time. While **all things are lawful for me**, Paul makes it clear that he will not **be brought under the power of any sin**. He will not let unprofitable things master him.

Verse 24—

Let no man seek his own. His own what? Paul doesn't say. In the context, it seems to be *Let no man seek his own welfare* (well-being), **but every man another's well-being**. Look out for the needs, the welfare of others in all that we do. Put others before us in our fellowship with one another. Remember who our fellowship is with; it is the Lord.

Verses 25-27--

Paul seems to be responding again to the question of eating meat that had been offered to idols. **Whatsoever is sold in the shambles.** The *shambles* meant the "meat market." Paul is making a broad statement here when he says **whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no questions for conscience sake.** We can't make a doctrine out of something that is vague. The truth of what Paul is saying is to look out for others, but don't fall into legalism.

Verse 28-29—

The reason we may hold back in doing something is not due to our own conscience. For us, it may be perfectly allowed by our own conscience, but we might participate in something that hurts someone else's conscience. That doesn't mean it is wrong, but that we are looking out for another's welfare.

Verse 30—

Freedom in Christ means allowance to partake in all things by grace. We would not want to use our grace to make something turn to **evil spoken of for that which I give thanks.**

Verse 31—

This statement sums up the entire argument, **whatsoever...to the glory of God.** This is a wonderful statement to gauge any action we might participate in: Does it bring **glory** to the Lord?

Verse 32—

When we seek to glorify God, we keep from bringing **offense** to others: Jews, Gentiles, **nor to the entire church of God.**

Verse 33—

Not seeking mine own profit. Why? So that they may be saved. This could be "saved from a bad conscience" Or, it could be "saved by realizing the grace of God. Either way, we are showing love, which leads one to Christ.

The next verse, 11:1, belongs in chapter 10.

Chapter 11:1

Verse 1—

In all of the above, **be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.** Paul sought the welfare of others; we should follow him and do the same—He learned it from Christ. When we follow Paul, we follow Christ. All things are lawful, but we must strive to do everything to the glory of God.