

## 1 Corinthians Class 12 transcript

Welcome back to FI Online.

This is class number 12 in our series on Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians.

We appreciate you joining us and listening to these classes as we go forward.

Last class, Class 11, we had **three questions** turned in, and we'd like to begin by answering those questions.

**First** of all:

You mentioned in tonight's class about those who abstain from alcohol because of alcoholism. Yet, what would be the proper approach toward someone whose conscience will not allow them to take wine at the Passover, not even a drop on the tongue as has been recommended, even though we have a direct command from the Lord to do so?

Well, I think we must understand that a properly educated conscience can help us to obey God by heightening our awareness of right and wrong and reminding us of the need to consider what God says when we make decisions. On the other hand, an improperly educated conscience leads us to look to ourselves and our own opinions instead of what God says.

As we explained, no one is born with an educated conscience. Any of us who grew up not knowing God's truth had to reeducate our conscience when we did come to understand that truth so that we could conform to it. But remember, conscience **never** supersedes God's specific instruction, no matter how sincerely a person may believe something. Jesus Christ's instruction about the Passover—and the wine being a part of that—is clear and unequivocal.

In John chapter 6 verses 53 and 54: *Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

It's absolutely essential that we partake in those symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus Christ if we are to have a hope of eternal life.

Now, I'm sure if one of our pastors encountered someone who had this kind of a conscience issue because of incorrect information, they would gently try to help that person come to a better understanding so that they could reeducate that conscience and do things in the way that God instructed. We are to conform to Jesus' specific instructions.

[2:47]

**Second** question:

1 Corinthians 8 verse 10 speaks of someone eating in an idol's temple in good conscience. But is anything known about the circumstances in the temple or even outside it which would make it possible to do so?

Well, first of all, Paul did not say it was acceptable to eat in the idol's temple. Two verses later in verse 12, he specifically says doing so would be a sin. The point he's making in this section is that knowledge alone—the knowledge that there's only one God, the knowledge that the idol is nothing—is not adequate to justify harming the conscience of your brother. And therefore, since eating the food in the idol's temple would be a sin, as he says in verse 12, then, no, there are no reasonable circumstances that would make it possible for someone to do that.

Our **third** question:

Although Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 9 verse 14 that the Lord commanded that he be supported by the brethren, he chose not to receive such support from the Corinthians (I might say: He chose not to receive support from the Corinthians **while** he was serving the Corinthians—make that clear. The question goes on.), therefore, can Paul's example be used for other exceptions to being supported for preaching the gospel?

Well, I'm not sure I really understand the question, but I'll try to address it as best I do. I suppose we could explain it in this way: Jesus and the disciples received direct contributions from people during their ministry. There was nothing wrong with that. And, since central banking didn't exist, that really would've been the only way they could've received the help that they needed to carry out that ministry.

Today our situation is very different. Our ministers do not accept direct contributions from people but instruct that any contributions be sent to the headquarters office.

It is common, for example, for many Protestant ministers who are supported entirely by the offerings from their local congregation—it's often common for a Protestant minister to receive extra amounts when they do things such as weddings or funerals. In fact, many funerals, especially, build it into the funeral bill. It's called an "honorarium" that's given for that particular individual. Protestant ministers often do that, and as we said, they're paid by the contributions from the local congregation. So that certainly makes sense, in many cases, for them to do that.

But our pastors are paid from headquarters, and therefore we do not accept contributions in that way. So, I suppose this could be an example of having a right to receive donations but declining to do so because of ethical reasons.

I hope that helps explain that question.

Now as always, we want God's blessing upon our class. So, if you will please, bow your heads and join me in asking for his blessing.

[Prayer]

[6:41]

In our last class, you may remember, we were discussing a principle that many people often don't recognize is valid for our world today in the situations we face. Paul was answering a question from the brethren in Corinth about food offered to idols and is it appropriate for a Christian to

partake of those? And Paul's made the point in **chapter 8**, "Well, we know there's only *one God*, and these *idols are nothing*, so in that sense, they don't have the ability to pollute the food in some way because it was offered to an idol."

But Paul is looking at a broader principle and one that is important for all of us to understand—the principle that just because something is legal doesn't always mean it's the best choice to make, that within the things which God allows us to do, there is a certain latitude. And the Christian has a responsibility to make judgments within that space that God gives us, not simply based on his or her own desires, but on what builds up.

Paul was using, as we got into **chapter 9**, the illustration in his own life about being supported by the tithes and offerings of the brethren that he was serving. And, apparently his policy was: wherever he was, he would not take the tithes and offerings from those people—not that they didn't give tithes and offerings, but he didn't use it for his own personal support, but, instead, was supported by people from other areas. As we saw, the brethren in Philippi had sent Paul support when he was in Corinth at least twice, perhaps three times.

Paul also referred to this principle when he talked about how God is the one who established this. That based upon Scriptural principles, he used the example of the *ox* not being *muzzled* when it's *treading out the grain* and the principle that the *laborer is worthy of his hire*.

Again, we referred to a passage in **Galatians 6** and **verse 6**: *Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.*

[8:59]

So, Paul showed that principle and said, "I have that right as I deal with you, but I don't choose to exercise it because I'm concerned it may cause offense for some. They're a little too sensitive where money is concerned, and I don't want anyone to come up with the idea that I'm just doing this because of the money or the support that I get from it. No, I'm doing it for genuine desire and because God has commissioned me to."

So Paul says in **verse 18** of **1 Corinthians 9**, as we continue on: *What is my reward then? —*

Or as we would put it today, the famous phrase: "What's in it for me? Okay, why am I doing this? If I'm not receiving the funds from you and I'm not looking for that, well, then someone's going to say: 'Okay then, what's your motive?' " So, he said, "Okay, what's my motive?"

—*That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.*

Now *abuse* probably is not quite the way we would translate it. The sense is: that I won't exploit; I won't use to the full the rights that I have because, within the gospel, I am allowed to receive the tithes and offerings and be supported by it. But I choose not to. It's legal, but it may not be the best thing to do in certain situations.

So he goes on to say, illustrating this even further, and it's a passage that, again, sometimes people have trouble understanding, or let's say that some people misapply this. So let's see what

he's saying because it's actually quite profound.

He says: **19** *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;*

*I'm free from all men.* What he means by that is: I'm not under an obligation to some human being. I'm not a slave. I'm not someone who is responsible, or, because they're receiving income from one person: "Well, I have to kind of cut them a little slack." Paul says, "No, *I am free from all people.* I have no individual that I answer to in that way other than Jesus Christ."

[11:13]

But he says, "What have I done with that freedom that I have? Well, I make *myself a servant.* I've decided that I would be *a servant to all, so that I might win the more.* I don't have to be *a servant to everyone.* *I am free* to do whatever I choose to do. But my choice is, within the parameters of the Christianity that God has given me, the freedom that He's given me when He freed me from my slavery to sin—within that, I need to make the decision that's best. And the decision that builds up is the decision to be a servant. Now what do I mean by that?" Paul says, "What do I mean? How do I do that?"

Well, he says, **verse 20** ... *to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews;* —

Now, we'll read the rest of the verse, but I want to just note what Paul is saying. Paul was Jewish. He tells us he was of the tribe of Benjamin, but he was viewed as a Jew. He saw himself as a Jew. He would've been considered a Jew in the ancient world and in Israel. So he said, "When it comes to the Jews, okay, I know how they think. I know what their culture teaches them. I know what their background is, so in going to them I approach them as a fellow Jew, as someone who understands."

We don't deal with as many Jewish people in the Church today, so it's not quite the same situation. But basically, what he's saying, in principle, is: for those who have been brought up with the truth, who know the truth in that sense, I approach them where they are. I approach them as one who knows the truth, and I respect that. I don't go back and have to reestablish very foundational things, just as Paul did not have to teach the Jews about the Sabbath, the Holy Days, clean and unclean foods. I don't have to go back and do that. They're already there. So, I can begin working with them where they are, and yet, with an understanding, with a recognition that—all right now, one of the things that we saw early on in the history of the first-century Church is: the Jews stumbled at the idea of a Messiah who was killed as a common criminal.

So, Paul basically is saying, "I understand why they feel that way. So, I will approach them with that understanding. Instead of standing back and saying, 'Well, you shouldn't think that way.' No. 'I understand how you think, and I had to struggle with that same problem myself. So, here's how I came to understand it.' " He approached them as Jews.

[13:53]

The next phrase probably throws some people off.

**Verse 20** —*to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;*

Now the commentaries—when you normally look at them—take this phrase *under the law* as saying that, “Well, there are some people who are obligated to obey the law, but the rest of us aren’t.” And basically, their approach would be, “Well, guys, Paul’s still talking about the Jews because they have to obey the law, but the rest of us aren’t under that law.”

Does that make any sense to you? That Paul would come along and say, “Okay, there are some people for whom God requires you live this way [gesturing with one hand], and there are other people for whom God requires you to live this way [gesturing with the other hand].” How’s that going to produce unity? Remember, that’s part of the theme that we have here. Part of the problem in Corinth was a lack of unity. So, how is having two different standards going to make people unified? That doesn’t make any sense. So, what is the phrase? Well, in the first place, it doesn’t say in the Greek “under **the** law.” It’s “under law.” Now what’s the difference between that?

If we said “under **the** law,” then we’re referring to one specific law and individuals being accountable to that. But the phrase “under law” itself essentially means individuals who are still living under the penalty the law imposes—individuals, therefore, who have not yet been forgiven for sin. We are no longer “under law” in the sense of the penalty of the law once the sacrifice of Christ is given for us.

So Paul is talking here about individuals who have not yet come under the sacrifice of Christ, and he said, “For those individuals, I understand how they feel. I understand what it’s like to feel guilt, to feel condemned because of the things that you’ve done.” Paul says, “I’ve done a lot of bad things, and I understand how you feel when you’re in that situation. So I can approach someone who feels like they are condemned by the law and therefore hopeless because they don’t have the ability to obey the law perfectly.” So, Paul says, “I understand what that feels like. And for those people—I can go to those people. I can go to people who are not yet forgiven, to help them understand that forgiveness is available to them.” You approach those people in a different way.

[16:36]

If we were to look at our world today—just looking at those two aspects of **verse 20**—on the one hand, the way you approach people who’ve grown up with the truth, who have been a part of the Church in the sense of knowing that truth for a period of time, is very different than the way you approach the world. You don’t approach them in the same way. Nor do we go out to the world that doesn’t know God’s way and say, “Oh, come on; be a part of the Church. Come on in, and when you’re here, then you’ll learn.” No, it doesn’t work that way. We, first of all, learn the truth. We approach those individuals to say, “Okay, you haven’t gotten this yet. Let us help you. Let us help, because we know what it’s like. We’ve been there too.” And we can help them to understand.

Now let’s go on here.

**Verse 21** *to those who are without law, as without law* —

And then he very quickly adds in a parenthetical expression.

— (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;

Now I want to look at this a little bit more closely because some of the Greek words here are important to understand.

Let's understand this phrase *without law*. It is in fact just one Greek word, *anomos*. *Nomos* is the Greek word for *law*. It applies to any *law*—the law of gravity, the law of God—name anything—the civil law; it applies in that way.

#### DEFINITION

Without law = *anomos*

- *Nomos* = law
- *a* = without

*anomia* = with law, lawless

But in Greek, when you add the letter *a* to a word that begins with a consonant as *nomos* does, it negates that word. It means *without*. So the word *anomos*, which is the word used here, means “living without law,” as if there is no law.

The adjective form of that (You'll see at the bottom of the slide.): *anomia*—without law, lawless.

Now, that's a phrase that is used in **1 John 3** and **verse 4**. *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.* (*Anomia*—living as if there is no law.)

[18:50]

Now I know that many times we—many of us probably remember or memorized **1 John 3:4** years ago because it says: *Sin is the transgression of the law.*

That's not the way the newer translations are. Are the newer translations correct? Well, as a matter of fact, yes, they are. Is the old translation incorrect? No, actually, that's there too. What do we mean by that? If a person lives as if there is no law, what are they going to do? They're going to transgress the law.

Suppose, for example—many of us in this country and many of the Western countries of the world would understand—if you're driving down the road and there is a speed limit that says 50—we'll say 50 mph or 50 km, depending on where you are—and you ignore that. You drive as if there is no speed limit—which is, again, quite common in most of our experience. What happens? If you don't have a law there, if you act as if there is no speed limit, then people very quickly transgress that limit. They very quickly go over it. They drive all kinds of speeds because they're living as if there is no law.

#### 1 JOHN 3:4

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness [*anomia*].

The same is true morally. If we go through life living as if there is no law, we're going to break the law; we're going to transgress it. If we applied that—say something simple: to the law of the Sabbath day—if we live as if there is no Sabbath day law, then we're very quickly going to transgress the Sabbath. So, to say *sin is the transgression of the law*, yes, because if you live as if there is no law, you will transgress the law. Likewise, to say *sin is lawlessness*, or living as if there is no law, is perfectly accurate as well.

So, what is Paul saying? He said: “To those who are *anomos*, those who live life as if there is no law,” he says, “then I approach them as if that’s the way I am too.”

Now what does he mean by that? He breaks the Sabbath? He does those things that are wrong? No, that’s not his point at all, and we’ll see as we go a little further. But his point is that if you’re dealing with someone who understands that there is a law of God that we—to which we are accountable, then you can approach them and say, “Here’s what God’s law says.” But if you approach someone who doesn’t believe in the law of God, or who doesn’t believe that God has a law regulating time, for example, on the Sabbath and you say, “God’s law says this,” they’re going to say, “Okay, so, what?”

[21:37]

So, Paul is simply saying, “I can’t approach a person who doesn’t understand the significance of God’s law by quoting law. That doesn’t work. I have to approach them in a different way.”

Now think about, if you look at the *Life Hope & Truth* website, how **many** different avenues there are that people can pursue. They don’t have to come through one avenue and say, “I want to know about **the law of God.**” But they can ask a question about any number of questions, any number of subjects that may come up. They may want to know about: Is it okay to keep Easter? They may want to know something about an immortal soul. They may want to know something about what happens when you die. They may want to know: Does God have anything to say about dating for Christians?

All of those things may be subjects that people have. They come to the *Life Hope & Truth* website, and it begins to show them those things. We don’t just base everything on law. We don’t just have a website that lists the laws—that’s it; take it or leave it. No, we try to approach people where they are.

Again, for those of you who’ve been around many years, you may remember the many different approaches that the old *World Tomorrow* radio and television program took. Many times it wasn’t about law. Sometimes it was. Many times, it wasn’t—because it reached out to people where they are. And that’s what Paul is saying here: “I could be a certain way. I don’t have to reach out to people in all these different ways. But it’s the best thing to do. It’s the right thing to do.”

So, he says that he reaches out to those who are *without law* as if he were *without law*, but he very quickly says: “But I’m *not without law toward God, but under law toward Christ.*”

Okay, what is he saying there? Well, it’s kind of an interesting phrase as well when you look at it. In **verse 20**, the words *under law* are *hupo nomos*. *Nomos*, again, means *law*. *Hupo* means *under*, or *beneath*. That’s why we say the phrase *under law* means you’re under the penalty that the law imposes for those who break it.

#### DEFINITION

Verse 20—“under law” = *hupò nómon*

- *nomos* = law
- *hupò* = under, beneath

Verse 21—“under law” = *énnomos*

- *en* = within, inside of

**Verse 21** translates it *under law*, but it's a different word. It's not *hupò nómon*; it is *énnomos*. *En* is a preposition that means: in, within, inside of. So Paul, when he says, "I am not without law toward God, but under law toward Christ," they translated it *under law*. But what it really means here is *within*. "I am keeping the law of God; I am subject to the law." So Paul is saying, "I approach people without bringing up the subject of law until we begin to establish a relationship. But, I don't live as if I'm not under law. Yes, I am. The law guides me. I am **within** God's law." That's the phrase he uses.

[24:42]

He says in **verse 22**: *to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

Now remember, in the previous chapter Paul has talked about the *weak* as those who don't have a full understanding and faith concerning the subject of food *offered to idols*. So in one sense, Paul has not changed subjects. He's coming back to that fundamental concept that's there, and he will continue this as we go forward.

There certainly is a time when you cannot bend because you would be compromising with the truth. We don't ever forget that. But there is also a time when you are free to make choices within the boundaries of God's law. And when those opportunities come, it's our duty to exercise love and concern for others to enable us to make the right decision—what we should do.

A Christian has to be able to discern when to apply which principle. The Pharisees were notoriously rigid. Others, unfortunately, notoriously lax. We kind of use the phrase early on in the Scripture where God says, "Where it comes to my law, don't *turn to the right hand or to the left*." [**Joshua 1:7; 23:6**] Some commentators say that turning *to the right* means adding things to the law that God didn't have there. Turning to the left means diminishing from the things that God says should be there.

Remember that the Pharisees continually **added** to the law. They continually put more and more and more on there. And, Jesus Christ did not praise them for going beyond what God says. You see the point is, when God gives us a way to live, He really doesn't need us to edit it. He knows what He's doing. If He sets a certain limit, that's a good limit. We don't need to extend it beyond that. We don't need to make a different limit. We need to do what He says. Neither do we need to compromise with that limit. We need to stay within the boundaries that God sets.

So Paul says, "For those people who were *weak*, yes, I reached out to them in that way."

[27:03]

*Barclay* makes this comment:

The man who can never see anything but his own point of view and who never makes any attempt to understand the mind and heart of others will never make a good pastor or even a good friend.

We need to be able to understand what other people—where they're coming from, what their



viewpoints are. I'm continually reminded of Stephen Covey's principle in his *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, the one that says: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

That's what Paul is saying. "I want first of all to understand, to reach people where they are, and then, when they know that I've understood what they're dealing with, what their problems are, what their attitudes and approaches are, what their concerns are, then and only then can I reach out to them and offer the truth that the gospel provides."

So, Paul says, **verse 23** ... *this I do* (this reaching out in this way) —

Again, as he said, becoming *all things to all men* that he *might save some*.

... *this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you*.

Paul doesn't set himself apart, as if somehow he's superior to everyone else. He continually says, "I want to receive the same thing God has promised to you. I don't see myself as superior in some way. I'm just grateful to be called and to have this opportunity now. And I look forward to sharing this with you."

[28:34]

Now Paul says, "How do we do this?" Again, you note that concept—that becoming *all things to all men*. Paul never compromised with God's truth in doing that. He doesn't say, "I became an evil person to reach evil people." No, he stayed within the parameters that God establishes with His law. But within those parameters there's a great deal of latitude. We're allowed to do a variety of things that God gives to us in that—in the way of life that He sets aside for us. And we need to make decisions based upon: What's good? What builds? What strengthens? We can find that principle in many areas of life, and we're going to continue to see it as we continue.

Okay, let's go on.

He says here—he gives us a metaphor that we probably can all understand. One of the things that I think we see when you go through the epistles of Paul is that like most men, Paul seemed to really enjoy sports. And, there was a lot of athletic endeavor taking place in the first-century world. It wasn't just the Olympics every four years. But there were the Isthmian Games in Corinth that took place on the—every four years, but on a two-year basis, alternating with the ones in Olympia. There were the games in Ephesus that were, again, every four years. It was very popular, and virtually every Greek and Roman city had at least one, if not many, gymnasiums—or "gymnasia" is the plural. And people went there all the time. They went there to exercise, to work out, to strengthen themselves, to keep their body in good shape. This was a part of the world then, and sports were very popular.

So, Paul is one of those who often uses sports metaphors, and here is one:

**Verse 24** *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.*

Now when you stop and think about this, we even have certain words that come over to us today

that come from this period of time. In the Greek world there was a race course, and it was called a “stadium.” Literally, a stadium was 606.75 feet around, and that was what was considered the distance called that. It was a measured distance, but the whole structure was called a “stadium.” You may have even seen, at times, that in the Roman world, distances were measured by stadia, which is more than one stadium. These things come through, and they are a part of what people do.

[31:17]

Now, Paul describes something here. Please don’t misunderstand what Paul is saying. He says that when people take part in a *race*, everybody runs, *but only one receives the prize*. Is he telling us that all of us as Christians are basically competing with each other for the prize? No, not at all. That’s not his point at all. His point is that the person who wants to receive the prize **has to run all out**. There can’t be any holding back. There can’t be any hoping that others won’t run as fast, and you just kind of pace yourself. No! A person who wants to win that *prize*, who wants to win the *race*, has to go all out and hold nothing back. And that’s what he’s saying here. *Run in such a way that you can obtain the prize that’s set before you*. This is what God intends.

So we’re not competing, but we are recognizing that Christianity is not a jog. It’s not a leisurely stroll. It’s **all out** to the finish line. And, that’s the way we need to see it as we conduct ourselves.

But, Paul also draws from the example of what was going on in that world, what was typical for those who would participate in the races in the Olympic Games, and so on.

So he says, **verse 25**: *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

Okay, the word that’s used here—he does use the word “compete.” Sometimes people are little uncomfortable with that. The Greek word is *agōnizomenos*. *Agōnizomai* is the verb, and it is the word that we use today for—it’s the root for “agonize.” The sense there is not competition, but the kind of effort that’s involved. And that’s the word that was used there. So it’s those who put this **extreme effort** out to be able to be a part of these things—that it takes a great deal of effort.

[33:29]

Now, it says that the individual who does that *is temperate in all things*. In other words, in order to compete, those who wanted to do that had to forgo a lot of activities that other people might freely indulge in. And, they did that because they had a bigger goal in front of them. Let me read this from one of the commentaries. It says this:

The candidate for the races was required to be ten months in training and to practice in the gymnasium immediately before the games under the direction of judges who had themselves been instructed for ten months in the details of the games. The training was largely dietary. Epictetus, one of the historians, says, “You must be orderly, living on spare food, abstain from confections, make a point of exercising at the appointed time in heat and in cold, nor drink cold water nor wine at hazard.” Horace says, “The youth who would win in the race has borne and done much. He

has sweat and been cold. He has abstained from love and wine.”

There was a specific regimen that those who wanted to participate in the race had to take part in. And Paul is telling us that for you and me, there may be times when we’re not racing all out, but it doesn’t mean we can live a profligate lifestyle and just not be concerned about what we do. No, if that goal is in mind, then it’s going to affect the way we live our life at all times.

[35:08]

A number of years ago, a few of us had the opportunity to visit Olympia in Greece, and this is the entrance to the ancient stadium. Those who were athletes would walk down this—well, anyone who went in would walk down this pathway, through the archway, and beyond, where you see a person standing, is the actual stadium where the events would take place. The whole area around here has training facilities. Now I’m talking about ancient training facilities—not today; it’s an archaeological site today. But, people would go there to train. It was very pagan. There were a lot of places to worship the gods and so on. But this was considered the pinnacle of where to go for the Olympic events.



But one of the things that I found really fascinating—we’re looking in one direction. If you turned around and looked in the opposite direction from this entryway, this arch, this is what you would see—a row of pillars. Now, there’s nothing on the pillars, just low pillars. And when we were there, we assumed that probably in ancient days statues had been placed upon those pillars of some of the great athletes and the ones that were recognized. But we found out that’s not true at all.



Actually, what took place is that if someone didn’t stick with the training regimen, and yet they tried to compete—in other words, they tried to cheat in order to be—maybe they thought: “Well, I’m good enough. I don’t have to do all of these things.” So they didn’t live up to the regimen that was expected. When it was discovered, they were fined, and the money of the fine was used to make a statue of them. And those statues, of those who tried to cheat, are what was placed on that entire row of pillars. So, the person who tried to cheat was put in front of everyone for disgrace. So it was a very significant thing for them. And I found that to be a fascinating part that I had no idea about.

[37:19]

Paul describes running in a race, and therefore he says, as he talked about this competing or agonizing, this stressing yourself like one who wants to win, he says:

*Therefore (verse 26) I run thus (that’s the way I run): not with uncertainty. —*

You can’t be hesitant. You can’t be holding back. In the race, if you want to win, it has to be all out. And Paul says, “That’s the way I am. I have this vision in my mind of what’s there, and that’s what I’m headed toward.” [Phil 3:14 *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*]

Then he uses a slightly different metaphor. He says:

—*Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

One of the commentaries puts it this way:

A boxer might be said to *beat the air* when practicing without an adversary. This was called “shadowboxing.” Or he might purposely strike into the air in order to spare his adversary, or the adversary might evade his blow and thus cause him to spend his strength on the air.

So there’re different ways in which it could be. But Paul is saying, “I don’t waste my efforts where it doesn’t do any good. I’m not willing to do that.”

*But (he says, **verse 27**) I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

So Paul builds on this metaphor of the training process that’s necessary in order to be able to compete in the race, in order to be able to accomplish that goal of winning the race. He said there’s a whole process involved of discipline of self. Self-discipline is necessary.

Now, when self-discipline is called for, there’s a certain latitude that we may have. God doesn’t prescribe how much sleep we’re allowed to get each day. He allows us to choose, but the book of **Proverbs [6:9-11]** tells us about the lazy person, the person who constantly, when it’s time to get up, is saying, “Oh, just a *little* more *slumber*, just a *little* more *sleep*.” No, the person who’s always hitting the snooze alarm, who can’t seem to get out of bed when the time comes to get out of bed. And He tells us that if we live that way, *poverty* will *come* your way. But God isn’t going to force you out of bed in the morning. He doesn’t say that if you don’t get out of bed on time each morning, you’re going into the lake of fire. Of course not. He doesn’t say that. So there’s latitude for us: what’s the best choice?

[40:01]

A few years ago, one of our students presented a speech, and I really admired him. I thought it was a very good presentation that he made. And, he was concerned that there were a number of his fellow students who had kind of gotten into the habit of staying up really late at night, and then sleeping in in the morning and showing up for class kind of almost still groggy, just barely having time to get up and wash their face and put clothes on and come to class. They really hadn’t had time to pray or do those things. That’s a part of life. Some people live their lives that way. So he advocated. He said, “Well, now what we need to do,”—and he wasn’t doing it self-righteously; he was saying—“What we really would need to do is, since we know we need to get up early so we’ve got time to pray and prepare as we should, then that means we’re going to have to go to bed earlier, and we can’t just stay up real late.” So he advocated going to bed earlier, getting up earlier.

Some of the students after listening to him said, “Well, what’s the difference? What’s the difference between going to bed early, getting up early, or going to bed late, getting up late? What’s the difference? You’re still getting basically the same amount of sleep.” And the answer was: there is

really only one difference. One of those two approaches requires character, and the other one doesn't. Anybody can stay up late and get up late. It takes character to control your life, instead of letting life just run by or control you.

So, I think that fits with what Paul is saying: "I discipline myself. Yes, I have latitude to make certain decisions. What's the best one? What builds, not just what's legal, what can I get by with?"

Now, this brings us to the next chapter. So let's go to **chapter 10**, and we'll see what Paul has to say here, because, again, Paul is not changing subjects; he's still continuing.

*Moreover, brethren (in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 1), I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,*

What's he doing? He's gone from races and boxing to talking about the ancient Israelites, as we'll see in the next few verses. Well, that's kind of an odd transition. What does he mean? Well, keep the principle in mind. At the end of **chapter 9**, Paul said that it was possible for him to be *disqualified* if he failed to exercise self-discipline. He's now going to illustrate that premise by showing us the example of Israel in the wilderness, where, in spite of having an exclusive and potentially beneficial relationship with God, an entire generation of God's chosen people were **rejected** from entering the Promised Land.

[43:01]

Paul says: *I don't want you to be unaware*. The word basically has to do with "being ignorant of something." But, probably the sense that we would take it is not so much a matter of somebody not **knowing** what's happened. All of us are aware of what happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness. That's not news to you. When I mentioned that in this passage, you're not sitting there saying, "Well, I have no idea what happened to them." You know very well what happened to them. But we may not think about it, and we may not stop to consider the significance. And when Paul uses this term here, he's not accusing these people of not **knowing** what happened, but he's saying, "You haven't really thought through what that means. You haven't really thought through the lessons that are intended there."

So, in one sense, as he says, "I don't want you to be ignorant," he may also be referring back—do you remember how **chapter 8** began? *We all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up. Love builds up.* "So, I don't want you to be without knowledge. Knowledge is important. You need to have it, but you need to use it—not just have it."

He goes on to say, **verse 2**: *all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,*

By coming under the cloud, which was symbolic of God's glory, and going under the water, which was symbolic of leaving the sin of Egypt behind, the nation entered into a special relationship with God.

Today, baptism is an individual decision—it's an action we take—because God deals with each individual, each person, individually. He calls us. He places us in the Body of Christ, individually. In the Old Testament, God entered into a special relationship with the **nation** when He brought them

miraculously out of Egypt. They were immersed *into*—it says here *baptized* or immersed, plunged into. Of course, *baptized* means literally “to plunge into.” They were plunged into a relationship with God in which God was using Moses to lead them and convey God’s will to them.

[45:20]

We don’t have a Moses today. We don’t have someone who does that for us today. God used Moses to provide them with physical salvation. Their lives were saved. They were brought out of the domination of Egypt. They were given a physical saving through Moses. But today God uses Jesus Christ to provide spiritual salvation.

Remember what Paul wrote back in **Galatians 3** and **verse 27**.

He said: *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

We’ve entered into a special relationship with God **through** Jesus Christ, and therefore we are *baptized into Jesus Christ*, in that sense.

He goes on to talk about ancient Israel. He says in [**1 Corinthians 10**] **verse 3**, *all ate the same spiritual food*,

Well, we know that the manna was not spiritual; it was physical. So what’s he talking about? He’s simply saying that the food they received—and we’ll see in the next verse, the water they received—he refers to as spiritual because the origin of it was from God. It wasn’t natural. It wasn’t something that normally occurred. It’s sometimes almost funny to read what commentators say about what took place in the wilderness. They try to explain the manna every morning, six days a week, for 40 years, as kind of a crust that forms on a certain desert plant. No! That’s not what it was. It was a bread that sustained people that came from God—miraculously!

And of course, we all know the story: if you tried to gather too much and keep it for a couple of days, it bred worms and would stink, other than on the Sabbath—you gathered enough for two days, and it was fine. Forty years of that. Do you realize what a witness that was? Day after day for 40 years they had manna. Oh, it wasn’t the entire 40 years, I know. But roughly, we’re saying for that period of time, every day they received the manna, except on the Sabbath. So they were reminded, week after week after week, [of] what He could do. God provided it. And Paul is pointing out that the physical should have helped them understand that while the physical is necessary to sustain your physical life, there’s spiritual that you need to sustain yourself as well.

[47:57]

He says: **verse 4** *and all drank the same spiritual drink*. —

What did they drink? Well, they drank water, but it was provided by God.

—*For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*

Literally, the phrase here is kind of a phrase that means “they continually drank.” This was something that went on over this entire 40-year period of time.

Sometimes the rabbis had a tradition—and some of it goes back as far as even the Islamic Koran—that there literally was a 15-foot-tall rock that followed the Israelites around for 40 years. No, that’s not the point. That’s not what’s being said. It’s saying that water came from the rocks, and in many cases it was miraculous.

Now that’s hard to imagine—because especially in our country we have so much water available—to recognize how crucial water is for survival. In that desert environment, water was **absolutely** necessary, and people were acutely aware of the need for water. The passages there, as we go through the book of **Numbers**, make that very clear.

But there’s something interesting here to keep in mind. Paul says *the Rock*, the source of the water that Israel had for 40 years, was the one who became *Jesus Christ*. There is a direct connection here. Paul states **unequivocally** that the one known as Jesus Christ in the New Testament was the same divine being who was with Israel in the wilderness. Now that doesn’t mean the Father had nothing to do with Israel throughout the entire Old Testament. But Jesus Christ is the one who directly interacted with them in virtually every case.

He goes on to say: [**1 Corinthians 10**] **verse 5** *But with most of them God was not well pleased,*  
—

He did all this for them. He gave them food; He gave them water, day after day. Gave them quail at times; gave them manna; protected them; led them in battle; gave them the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud that they saw day after day after day. *But with them, God was not pleased.* It didn’t change them. With all of the gifts they received, it didn’t change them. They had the opportunity to do the right thing, but they didn’t.

[50:32]

And it goes on to say: —*for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.*

Some of the commentators say this is a very graphic phrase here. It literally means that their bodies were, in a sense, not at one point piled up, but just, throughout the whole journey, there is a litter of bodies being cast aside, buried as you wander through the whole 40 years.

Then Paul says, “Okay, you know the story; so what does it mean?”

**Verse 6** *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*

Now we’ll look at that specifically, but remember the principle Paul is bringing out: look at the *example*. Here are people who were set aside as God’s people. Okay. They **knew** the true God. But knowledge alone isn’t enough. It’s got to be more. You still have to make the right decisions.

So he said, part of the lesson there, our lesson—and again Paul includes himself there—is to learn from what they went through. Don’t lust after, don’t desire evil things like they did.

He says in **verse 7**, and it’s the next step built upon that lust: *And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”*

Literally, the phrase in the Greek is “stop becoming idolaters.” Oh, wait a minute. Remember what we’re talking about? Food *offered to idols*. And he tells the people in Corinth: “Stop becoming idolaters.”

Now, when you look at that situation of what took place in ancient Israel as they were in the wilderness, they didn’t intend to become idolaters. They got Aaron to put together a golden calf, and they had a feast, which they called “a feast to God.” They said, “Oh, no, no, we’re not worshiping the idol. That just represents God. It reminds us of God. But they were idolaters. And, what they did in the process was they ate and drank—oh—in front of an idol. They ate and drank food *offered* before an *idol*, and then they *rose up to play*.”

[53:05]

Let’s look at this. Let’s go back to **Exodus 32** and see what it tells us about the incident.

Starting in **verse 4**, he says: *And he (referring to Aaron) received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.*

*Then they said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” 5 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow is a feast to the (And the term there is the term that was used for the true God—Yahweh.) ... 6 Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

It’s not entirely clear, this concept of rising up to play. It can refer to dancing, not in the sense of there being—you know, we’re not talking, you know, they got up to rhumba. That’s not it. We’re talking about a kind of dance that was done ceremonially in front of the gods as a pleasing thing to them. It’s that kind of thing. “A ceremonial revelry, as the pagans danced before their gods” is what one [commentary] said. Some see in this a sexuality, and that may be too. That may be a part of what was there because that was quite customary when it came to worshiping the pagan gods. Eating, drinking, celebrating were all connected with and seen as a part of the worship of the idol and the god that it represented.

He goes on to say: [**1 Corinthians 10**] **verse 8** *Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;*

Again, the Greek is pretty graphic. “Let us stop committing sexual immorality.” It refers to the Israelites being seduced into the worship of *Ba’al Peor*. *Ba’al* can be pronounced *Ba’al*, *Baal*, *Bay’al*. We don’t really know exactly, but the sense of it you understand. And it’s described in **Numbers 25 verses 1 through 9**.

[55:24]

*Expositor’s* says this:

This Ba’al-peor was the god of the Moabites, who was worshiped by the prostitution of virgins. Idolatry and fornication were in that case inseparable.



They were a part of it. Now remember, we read early on as we were looking at this subject, there are other passages in Scripture that connect idolatry and feasting and sexual immorality. And that seems to go together. So Paul is now beginning to tie the bundle up here.

Now he mentions: “In that day *twenty-three thousand fell*.” Some look at this and say, “Oh, no, wait a minute—in the Old Testament it says it was 24,000.” Okay, that’s not really a significant issue. But, it’s certainly possible that, as it says here, *twenty-three thousand* died in one *day*, and a thousand died another day—and still get 24,000. So, it can be taken any way. It’s not a loose brick.

**[1 Corinthians 10] verse 9** *nor let us tempt —*

And the sense there is “to test,” but it’s more than simply “test.” It’s an intensive word. So it’s “to test thoroughly, to run it all the way to the limits” here.

*... let us (not) tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;*

Again, this is a reference to **Numbers 21 verses 5 and 6**, where it tells us:

**5** *And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread (God’s gift that was keeping them alive).”* **6** *So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. (Because of their approach, their complaining, their tempting of God.)*

So, Paul is saying we need to be very careful that what we’re doing, the decisions that we make, they may be legal, but are we, in that sense, tempting God, pushing the limits in a way that’s not good, that destroys? Just as the Israelites failed to recognize that their words and their actions were testing God, the Corinthians were failing to see that their actions were testing God’s patience too.

[58:04]

He goes on to say in **[1 Corinthians 10] verse 10**, *nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*

There are a couple of different possibilities this could refer to. It may be in **Numbers 14**, where they are at Kadesh-Barnea, and there is grumbling against God. It may have referred to **Exodus 12**—or **Numbers 14:37**, I should say—about a plague that comes upon them. We don’t know exactly there. But the point is—**Numbers 16**, the rebellion of Korah is another possibility. But, the attitude that led to the grumbling and complaining is what led to the punishment upon them. They’re God’s people. They’re in a special covenant relationship with God. They **have the knowledge** of God and the **knowledge** of God’s way. But they’re making bad judgments, and they’re deciding on things and doing things in a way that causes a problem. So, it may be that some of those in Corinth were feeling like: “Well, you know this—Paul is being too restrictive here. This is too hard.” Maybe they’re grumbling and complaining about what Paul is saying.

But Paul says, **verse 11** (Okay) *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

These things happened—literally the Greek there is “they happened one after another.” One thing after another—they just kept happening over and over and over again. And they’re preserved to teach us, so that we learn the lesson—we don’t just read about it and see history. We say, “Where did they go wrong? What was it that led to this problem?”

Remember the principle—this is the book of **1 Corinthians** that does talk about Passover and Unleavened Bread—and that principle: *a little leaven leavens the whole lump*. What was the little bit of leaven that they allowed that led to this kind of an outcome? We’re supposed to look at these things and learn.

**Verse 12** *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

You see, our assessment of our own spiritual condition—which is kind of what was going on in Corinth— “Well, we know these things. We know that idols are nothing. We can eat these things.” And Paul says, “You know, your assessment of yourself may not be the most accurate assessment.” We have to be constantly on guard to the spiritual dangers around us.

[1:00:52]

It’s kind of interesting when he talks about the individual who thinks he can stand lest he fall. The *Barclay’s Commentary* makes an interesting reference, and I thought it was interesting. I’ll show you a slide again of the ancient Acropolis of Sardis, and here’s what *Barclay* records:

Again and again a fortress has been stormed because its defenders thought that it was impregnable. In **Revelation 3:3** the risen Christ warns the Church of Sardis to be on the watch. The Acropolis of Sardis was built on a jutting spur of rock that was held to be impregnable.



You can see that in the picture.

When Cyrus was besieging it (Cyrus was the leader of the Medo-Persian Empire at this point.), he offered a special reward to any who could find a way in. A certain soldier was watching one day, and he saw a soldier in the Sardian garrison drop his helmet accidentally over the battlements. He saw him climb down after it, and marked his path. That night he led a band up the cliffs by that very path, and when they reached the top, they found it quite unguarded; so they entered in and captured the citadel ...

We can be so certain we’re safe, so certain our condition is good, and God can show us that no, as a matter of fact, we’re not.

Well, the next verse is a very important one and one that we’ve all read many times, but we’re out of time for today’s class. So, next time, please join us. We will pick up in **verse 13 of 1 Corinthians chapter 10**.

[1:02:38]