

CORINTHIANS - The MORE EXCELLENT WAY

STUDY 11

Thanksgiving, Temptation & Two Tables

... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons ... Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 COR.10:20,21,31

Study 11a: The True Eucharist -- a Thankful Heart (10:1-10)

10:1-4 What seems to be the delusion that some Corinthian believers had succumbed to?

This passage is the continuation of the foregoing. What the apostle has just indicated as a possibility for himself, he now points out as a reality in the history of the Jewish people. In them we have a nation who, after having been the object of the most ample favours from God, favours even which were perfectly analogous to those we enjoy as Christians, nevertheless perished because of its failure in self-renunciation. [Godet 478]

[v.4] It has been justly observed that in this passage we find for the first time the combination of the two sacred acts of baptism and the Lord's supper, as forming a complete whole: the one representing the grace of entrance into the new life, the other the grace by which we are maintained and strengthened in it. The combination of these two acts, under the particular name of *sacraments*, is not therefore an arbitrary invention of dogmatic. [Godet 487]

10:5-10 Though they *thought* they lacked many things, what was it Israel REALLY lacked?

[v.6] The two figures *to be standing* and *to fall* do not represent the state of grace or condemnation, but the state of fidelity or sin; comp. Rom.xiv.4. [Godet 496]

The sacraments together for the first time

Study 11b: Temptation & Spiritual Highwires (10:11-22)

10:11-13 Why can none plead that the world, the flesh and the devil are the reasons for their sin?

False security of salvation commonly rests on the ground of our belonging to a privileged body (the church), or to a privileged class (the elect). Both are equally fallacious. Neither the members of the church nor the elect can be saved unless they persevere in holiness; and they cannot persevere in holiness without continual watchfulness and effort. [Hodge 181]

10:14-18 When we partake of the Lord's table, what are we saying to God?

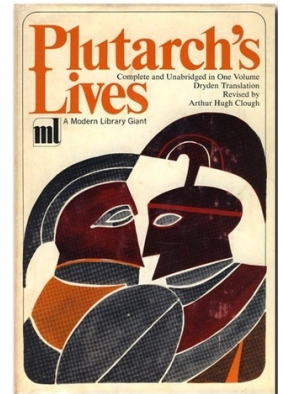
[v.14] The address, *my dearly beloved*, is not a common one. It indicates something of Paul's deep emotion as he urges his dear friends to take the right course. As he had counselled them in vi.18 to 'flee fornication', so now he says *flee from idolatry*. Here, as there, the present imperative gives the thought of the habitual practice. There is to be no leisurely contemplation of sin, thinking that one can go so far, and is safe from going further. [Morris 145]

[v.15] The ... passage rests on these principles: that any religious act whatever brings us into communication with the spiritual world, that this exercises a power, and that the nature of the influence thus exercised depends each time on the character of the invisible Being to which the worship is thus addressed. Thus the Holy Supper brings the believer under the influence of Christ (vv.16,17); the Jewish sacrifice brings the Israelite into contact with the altar of Jehovah (v.18); and the heathen sacrificial feast brings man under the influence of the demons whose arts have given birth to idolatry. [Godet 503]

10:19-22 Israel's bodies were in the wilderness, their hope was in Canaan -- but their hearts were in Egypt. Where's the parallel in the 1st century -- or in the 20th?

[v.20] The Jews identified heathen divinities with the demons themselves; thus it is that the LXX. translate in Isa.65:11, the phrase: "to prepare a table for the host of heaven," by: "to prepare a table for the demon." The pagan Plutarch ... ascribes to wicked spirits all that was barbarous and cruel, for example, human sacrifices in heathen religions. We may compare also Ps.96:5: "For all the gods of the heathen are demons" (in Hebrew *idols*), and Baruch, chap.4: "They sacrifice to demons, not to God." It is in this Jewish acceptance that the term is used here. But the words of the apostle do not imply the idea that every false god worshipped by the heathen corresponds to a particular demon; they signify merely that heathen religions emanate from those malignant spirits, and that consequently the man who takes part in such worship puts himself under their influence. [Godet 517]

The golden calf is still worshipped. Many worship money, wealth, pleasure, and yet claim to be followers of the lowly Saviour. [Ironsides 286]



Study 11c: Is ONE Spiritual Table Separation? (10:23-11:1)

10:23-26 Can we identify the problem that some Corinthian believers experienced? (cf. ch.8)

[v.25] ... that Paul should give Christians *carte blanche* to **eat whatever is sold** in a pagan market shows how completely emancipated he was from Jewish obligations in the matter of food and how loosely he sat to the food-restrictions of the Jerusalem decree. Cf. 1 Tim.4.3-5 where, however, the assertion that 'everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving' is more probably a *riposte* to asceticism of a gnostic type. [Bruce 98]

10:27-30 What is taken for granted -- by Paul -- when it comes to [literal] table fellowship?

[v.28] A present-day analogy may be imagined if someone with strong principles on total abstinence from alcohol were the guest of friends who did not share these principles. He would be well-advised not to enquire too carefully about the ingredients of some specially palatable sauce or trifle, but if someone said to him pointedly, 'There is alcohol in this, you know', he might feel that he was being put on the spot and could reasonably ask to be excused from having any of it. [Bruce 100]

10:31-11:1 Again, Paul indicated we should forego our natural rights -- for the advancement of the gospel [NOTE: Paul's partition of the human race, v.32, -- some would make only 2 divisions!]

[v.31] The principle is clear. The Christian is not concerned with the assertion of his rights, but with *the glory of God*. Eating, or drinking, or anything else, must be subordinated to this major consideration. [Morris 150]

**"Do all to the
glory of God"**

[11:1] In chap.9 the apostle had developed at length the example of self-denial, which he was constantly giving to the Church by submitting to the necessity of earning a livelihood for himself, and in general, by becoming subject, when it was necessary, to the legal observances, from which he felt himself set free by faith in Christ. In concluding this whole passage, in which he has asked the Corinthians to make many sacrifices which are painful to them, he once more refers to his example, because he knows that we are not at liberty to ask sacrifices from others except in proportion to those which we make ourselves. [Godet 529]

holiness and love, manifested in the midst of His creatures. The question for the Christian is therefore translated into this: What will best make my brethren understand the love and holiness of my heavenly Father? [Godet 528]

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Salvation not primary issue in our decisions

In questions which are not in themselves questions of good and evil, and which may remain undecided for the Christian conscience, the believer ought to ask himself, not: What will be most agreeable to me, or what will best suit my interest? but: What will contribute most to promote God's glory and the salvation of my brethren? -- God's glory is the splendour of his perfections, particularly of His