

“Give None Offence”

1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

We have seen most of these principles already taught in the book of First Corinthians, and they are given here again as a means of reinforcing the teaching that what we do as a believer individually, and what we do as a church corporately, is directly related to whether people will be saved (vs. 32). If we use our liberty in Christ, and our liberty in America, as a tool to have our own way, or do things how we want them, then we are clearly demonstrating that people becoming believers is not as important to us as our liberty is – how sad that would be.

This is the final point made by the Apostle Paul when it came to the issue of idolatry and eating of things offered to idols. It is a case of liberty – liberty in Christ to act upon the personal convictions He has put upon us – but it also a case of being more concerned for others than we are ourselves.

There are many arguments made today by pastors and teachers that use Scripture to justify their actions, and if we want to find a Bible verse to justify what we do, no matter what that may be, we can find one. The scope of Scripture, the preponderance of the evidence throughout, is that our liberty in Christ should never be a hinderance to someone coming to Christ – no matter what personal cost to us. And, our liberty in Christ should never be the cause of a believer, especially an immature believer, from growing in their faith, for, ultimately, if we strengthen them we will further the cause of the gospel to the lost – “that they may be saved.”

So, how do we live our life in Christ in a way as to

“give none offence?”

I. EDIFY – VS. 23

- A. One primary purpose of the pastor’s ministry in the church, especially when it comes to the teaching ministry, is to “edify” others, and in so doing make it possible for the lost to come to Christ.**
- B. We saw this same point made in chapter six but it’s made here again to reinforce the point – all things may be allowed for us to do that may not have been allowed under the Levitical Law, but just because we have the right to do something doesn’t mean that it is “expedient” – that it is profitable to others, and if not then we should consider our actions in relation to others.**
- C. To “edify” (οἰκοδομέω) is to build. The word is used 40 times in the New Testament and 30 of those it is translated with the idea of building. The word is one that means to build a house, to construct a house. Metaphorically (as it is used here), it means “to promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness” (Thayer).**
- D. We are to do that which builds the believer up in their faith and not do anything that would either cause that believer to be limited in their growth or cause them to stumble and fall.**

Romans 14:19

¹⁹ Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Ephesians 4:29

²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

¹¹ Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

II. EXERCISE – VS. 24

A. *We have the express command here to makes sure we exercise our liberty for the sake of others so they can exercise their liberty for the growth of others.*

B. *"Let no man seek his own" – it's not about me, it's about you.*

C. *"But every man another's wealth" – the word "wealth" is supplied by the translators and has no corresponding word in the Greek. It would read simply, "but every man another." The issue of "wealth" is added to emphasize the value of the point – our goal is to seek for others whatever it is that would increase their effectiveness for Christ. There is ample evidence throughout Scripture for this point.*

Philippians 2:4-5

⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ

Jesus:

D. We live in such a self-serving society today that I'm not sure we would even know how to do this but imagine what would be accomplished for the cause of Christ if we did.

III. EMPOWER – VS. 25-30

A. By that is meant to make someone stronger. We are to build others up, we are to allow them to mature in their liberty while understanding how to exercise that liberty, and we are to do all we can to strengthen their faith.

B. There are two illustrations given in verses 25-29 that deal with the "conscience." The first deals primarily with the conscience of the reader, the second deals primarily with the conscience of others (which is the primary point of the entire passage).

1. Συνειδήσις – to be conscious of –
"Conscience, to be one's own witness, one's own conscience coming forward as witness. It denotes an abiding consciousness whose nature it is to bear inner witness to one's own conduct in a moral sense (Titus 1:15). It is self-awareness." (Zodhiates)

"[T]he soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending one, condemning the other."
(Thayer)

2. Vs. 25-26 use the illustration of buying meat in the market that may come from idol sacrifice. The word for “shambles” (μάκελλον) is only used here in the New Testament and it deals with what was seen in chapter eight – meat sold that was offered to idols. “In sacrifices usually only a part of the victim was consumed. The rest was given to the priests or to the poor, or sold again in the market. Any buyer might therefore unknowingly purchase meat offered to idols.” (Vincent)
3. “That eat, asking no question for conscience sake” – don’t ask if it was offered to idols so as to not cause a conflict in your own conscience (considering their past) nor in the conflict of another. As verse 24 states, “all things are lawful for me” – it may not be wrong to eat of those things but if it cause undue strain mentally because we know there’s a conflict that could come from it.
4. Vs. 26 (and repeated in vs. 28) shows that all things of creation are the Lord’s and are given to us for our good – including meat. Whether it was offered to idols, from the believer’s standpoint, is not relevant, anymore than buying something today that could be used for evil purposes (the internet, TV, mobile devices, weapons, etc.). But, once something is found being used for something other than good purposes, the conscience will have to account for that purpose. The analogy for the church in Corinth was this issue of meat offered to idols because of the

importance in played in their lives in the past and their conscience was still affected by that. Similarly, today, if someone who is recovering from substance abuse comes into contact with that former life, it may cause severe conflict in their conscience, and/or in the conscience of a weaker believer.

5. This isn't the "don't ask, don't tell" philosophy of the world today. This teaching is given to express the importance of considering what we do and why we do it. Eating meat that may have been part of idol worship at the time has already been shown to not be unscriptural, but it still has the potential to cause others to stumble, so once it is known that it is a problem then it's best to avoid that particular things.
6. Vs. 27-29 is an illustration of being invited to a dinner and being told the meat being served was offered in sacrifice to idols. The same thing is said here as previous – don't ask if it was offered to idols, since that has no bearing on righteousness in the life of the believer. But if you're told before hand that it was then abstain from eating it for the sake of the conscience "of the other" (vs. 29).
7. Vs. 29-30 are often either taken out of context to prove we can do what we want, or they are misunderstood in relation to the context. They do not say we can do what we want – we have liberty in all cases. Within the context, the Apostle Paul

is teaching that although we may have liberty to do certain things, and we may question why we need to change our practices because someone is offended or doesn't understand, isn't mature enough in their faith just yet, but we do so anyways for "the other." Vs. 31 makes this point clear.

Albert Barnes makes this point: The sense may be thus expressed: "I am free; I have "liberty" to partake of that food, if I please; there is no law against it, and it is not morally wrong: but if I do, when it is pointed out to me as having been sacrificed to idols, my liberty - the right which I exercise - will be "misconstrued, misjudged, condemned" (for so the word κρινεται krinetai seems to be used here) by others. The weak and scrupulous believer will censure, judge, condemn me as regardless of what is proper, and as disposed to fall in with the customs of idolaters; and will suppose that I cannot have a good conscience. Under these circumstances, why should I act so as to expose myself to this censure and condemnation? It is better for me to abstain, and not to use this liberty in the case, but to deny myself for the sake of others."

IV. EXCITE – VS. 31

A. Simply put, motivate others, excite others, to do all they do, as we do all we do, "to the glory of God."

- B. No matter what we do – within the context, the eating and drinking is related to that “feast” mentioned in vs. 27, and the consequences that come from it – all of it is to be done for the sake of the gospel, and for the glory of God.**
- C. To glorify God is to honor Him, to do those things that would bring Him praise, and point people to Him. This does not mean we can do anything we want because we’re a Christian, and because we are that gives us liberty to whatever we want and God will be glorified in it (that’s what some consider the preposition “to” points to). The word used (εἰς) is a primary preposition indicating the point reached, or the direction toward. The glory of God is the goal, it is the direction all things are to point, and all things are to be done “toward” or “for” His glory, His honor, not ours.**

[Colossians 3:17](#)

¹⁷ And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

[Colossians 3:23](#)

²³ And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

[1 Peter 4:11](#)

¹¹ If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

V. ENCOURAGE – VS. 32

A. *That is, encourage one another to live and act in such a way as to not be the cause of a brother or sister in Christ to stumble in their walk with the Lord.*

B. "Give none offence"

1. "Give" – γίνεσθε, γίνομαι – literally, "be you"
2. "None offence" - ἀπρόσκοποι – the Greek word "προσκόπτω" with the aleph privative which negates the word (like "atheist"). The word negated is one that means to trip up. We are to never be the one that causes anyone else to "trip up," to stumble, in their faith.
3. "Neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" – to the non-believing Jews, to the as-yet-unconverted Gentiles, nor to those believers already part of the church in Corinth. We are to make sure we do nothing that would cause a non-believer of any sect, race, nation, creed, etc. to not want Christ as their Savior. And, we are to never do anything, knowingly, that would cause a believer to "trip up."

[Romans 14:13](#)

¹³ Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

[2 Corinthians 6:3](#)

³ Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

VI. EVANGELIZE – VS. 33

A. The only way our witness, our evangelization, will be effective in bringing people to Christ is if we follow the Bible. Too many times we are taught to follow man, to follow their ideas of evangelism, to follow their "script" in winning souls. This verse gives us God's "script" of people coming to Christ. Taken with the rest of Scripture as it teaches us what it means to be a "fisher of men," we have all we need to be effective.

B. The process – "please all"

1. "Even as I" – the Apostle Paul uses himself as an example of what it will take to effectively evangelize the lost. This points to the entirety of his testimony among the Corinthians, both when he was there with them in person, as well as his writings to them. "Act as I do: forgetting myself, my own interests, convenience, ease, and comfort, I labor for the welfare of others; and particularly that they may be saved" (Clarke).
2. "Please all men in all things" – this is not the result, but the practice on Paul's part (Meyer quoted by Alford) – this was what he did to accomplish his mission, not the result of the mission.
 - a) The words "men" and "things" were added

by the translators for clarity – this would literally read (παντα πασιν αρεσκω) “all in all please,” or, “everyone in each thing please” (Zodhiates).

1 Corinthians 9:22

²² To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

- b) “Please” – present active indicative – “am pleasing” – something he was doing right then and would continue to do. The word for “please” (ἀρέσκω) is defined by Thayer as: “to accommodate one’s self to the opinions, desires, and interests of others.” He wasn’t “going along to get along,” he wasn’t doing whatever the people wanted because he didn’t want to hurt their feelings – he was simply putting their needs ahead of his own. “I seek to accommodate myself to each one without discrimination in order to win as many as possible to Christ” (Zodhiates).

Romans 15:2-3

² Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

³ For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

C. The plan – “seeking...the profit of many”

1. “Not seeking mine own profit” – this clarifies the first point, making it abundantly clear that he had no personal gain in mind in anything he did for Christ.
 - a) “Not seeking mine own” – not looking to

find gain for himself

- b) "Profit" – συμφέρω – compound word literally translated, "to bring together." It was the Apostle Paul's desire, as it should be ours, that what he did he did for the advantage of others, no matter who they were – Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female. This is especially relative today, with all the racial unrest in this country. There should never be a time, place, or people that we would choose to NOT evangelize simply because we don't like them.

Romans 14:19

¹⁹ Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Philippians 2:4–5

⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Hebrews 10:24

²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

D. The purpose – "that they might be saved"

Not much needs to be said here – fairly self-explanatory. This is the primary reason we are still alive as believers – "that they might be saved." God didn't choose any particular people group, nationality, or color to be saved – He chose ALL to be saved.

VII. EMULATE – 11:1

A. Although the Apostle Paul was not the pastor/elder or pastor/overseer of the church in Corinth, his use of the principle of being an example to them to follow is continued today in the person of the pastor of the church.

B. This is a command, and imperative – this wasn't optional for the church in Corinth if they were going to be effective in their evangelism, and in their spiritual growth overall. It shouldn't be optional in the church today, either. Sadly, however, many pastors cannot be scripturally followed because they are not scripturally sound.

C. There is the one right interpretation here that is very applicable, and there is also a clear application that is seen throughout the letter.

1. The context in which this mandate is found is one that needs to be considered. "Imitate my example in the matter now under discussion. As I deny myself; as I seek to give no offence to anyone; as I endeavor not to alarm the prejudices of others, but in all things to seek their salvation, so do you" (Barnes).
2. There is a secondary application also found here. It isn't blind obedience; it isn't blind following that God is commanding here. If the leadership over us is not following Christ, as He teaches in His word, then we

are under no obligation to follow. That said, one needs to be very careful, and very sure they are right and that the pastor is wrong before they decide to rise up against him for “false teaching.” No pastor is above the mandates of Scripture, but if they are following Christ this text makes it abundantly clear what the church’s responsibility is to the pastor – “follow,” imitate, mimic.

Titus 2:7-8

⁷ In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

⁸ Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Hebrews 13:7

⁷ Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Hebrews 13:17

¹⁷ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

D. “Be ye followers of me”

1. “Be ye” – γίνεσθε, from γίνομαι – simply, “be” this – become what God intends you to be – obedient to the spiritual leadership of the church (the pastor/elder) as they are to the Lord.

2. "Followers" – μιμηται, from μιμητής – this is where we get the word "mimic" (it's a transliterated word). Means to imitate, to pattern oneself after – in this case, primarily speaking of the pastor/elders of the church in Corinth, they were to follow Paul, and then, by extension and application, the lay people of the church were then to follow, to imitate, the pastor/elder as they follow Christ.
3. "Of me" – again, showing himself as the example to follow.

Philippians 3:17

¹⁷ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

1 Thessalonians 1:6

⁶ And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

2 Thessalonians 3:9

⁹ Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

Hebrews 6:12

¹² That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

E. Even as I also am of Christ"

This is the key to following – only follow those that are following Christ.

Conclusion: We say we want to see people saved,

we want to see the kingdom of God advanced, but are we really willing to do what it takes for that to happen? Are we willing to sacrifice, to give up our own selves for the sake of others?