

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Paul said, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). I praise you today for your Son, Jesus Christ. He gave his body to be broken for my sins, and he shed his precious blood to inaugurate the New Covenant of salvation. I remember the death that he died when I partake of the Lord’s Table, and I honor his sacrifice by walking in holiness. Hallelujah!

Today in Your Word

Today you shared with me more of Paul’s second letter to the church at Corinth (called 1 Corinthians). Having dealt with various sins in the church, Paul now addressed the issue of “food offered to idols.” He began by acknowledging that what the Corinthians knew about idols was true: there is only one God, and idols do not really exist. However, while they were theologically correct, they had sinned against those who believed that if you ate such food you were, in fact, worshiping idols. By insisting on their right to eat such food, the Corinthians were encouraging the weak to violate their conscience. The liberty of some had become a stumbling block for others. Paul was rightly upset by this, and he called on those with knowledge to love their weaker brothers by sacrificing their “right” to eat food offered to idols. He went on to point out that he had sacrificed his right to financial support as he labored to spread the gospel. Rather than demanding support from the church, he had worked night and day to support himself. Winning the lost to Christ was more important to Paul than anything else, and he was determined to “become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22). Paul concluded by reminding the Corinthians of the danger of idolatry. The exodus generation, the people who witnessed the greatest acts of God the world had ever seen, had fallen away through the influence of idolatry. Their lack of self-control and craving for the things of the flesh had caused them to be overthrown in the wilderness. “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry!” (1 Cor 10:14). More than anything, Paul wanted the Corinthians to have a passion for God’s glory and a heart of love for their fellow believers. Today’s reading teaches me several important lessons: (1) Determining whether or not a given activity is wrong is very important, but I must also consider whether it’s edifying to others (1 Cor 10:23). Part of loving others is considering how my behavior affects them. (2) A fellow believer is said to be “weak” if they *would be influenced by my liberty to violate their conscience and do something they believe to be wrong* (1 Cor 8:10). If I care about others, I will be concerned about their conscience. (3) I have an obligation to limit my liberty out of love and concern for a weak brother, for if they are encouraged to violate their conscience because of my actions, then I have sinned against them and against Christ (1 Cor 8:10–12). (4) My primary motivation should be the glory of God and the good of others (1 Cor 10:31–32). Like Paul, I should try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, that they may be saved (1 Cor 10:33).

Reflection

Paul said that Christ is the head of man and man is the head of the woman (1 Cor 11:3 NASB). Am I honoring the authority structure of your church? If I’m a man, am I keeping my hair cut short? If I’m a woman, am I letting my hair grow long? (cf. 1 Cor 11:13–15 NASB).

Request

Father, help me to be more concerned about others than I am about myself. Give me the passion that Paul had for the lost and empower me to be the servant of all, that I might win more (1 Cor 9:19).

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the example of the apostle Paul, a man who was caught up in his desire to win the lost for you. I say with him, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16).

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “Win One Every Day” – Lida S. Leech.

Meditation Verse: 1 Corinthians 8:13.