

Week 7: Freedom and the Law of Love - 1 Cor 10-11:1

Pre-Work

- The Story of Israel (Jacob) is part of a broader narrative that has already been well established. For a refresher on the first 11 chapters of Genesis, which function as a primer for how to read the rest of the Bible, please watch this video on Genesis 1-11 from The Bible Project.
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/genesis-1-11/>
- An important part of understanding biblical narrative (and oh but we have a lot of biblical narrative to go over for the next 19 weeks!) is “setting”. To the biblical authors, “setting” is not merely where the events of the narrative take place, but it is also an important canvas on which they can paint a picture that supports themes and ideas related to that setting in the future. Please watch this video from The Bible Project to understand the use of “Setting” in the Bible more clearly.
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/setting-biblical-narrative/>

Class Notes

- Freedom, responsibility, and mission: pursuing our “rights” in certain things that violate the consciences of others violates the responsibility to love God and love others.
- Now Paul will use his understanding of the scriptures to show the pattern of expectation for avoiding activities that could cause a believer with a weak conscience to stumble

Chapter 10

1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers *and sisters*, that our fathers were all under the cloud and they all passed through the sea; **2** and they all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; **3** and they all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

- The Israelites, “saved” from enslavement under the Powers, all experienced what foreshadows our own experience as Christians, including baptism and the Lord’s supper, as well as the life of Christ.

5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased; for *their dead bodies* were spread out in the wilderness.

- They failed to live the Kingdom life that was given them.

6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they indeed craved *them*.

- The lesson isn’t to look down on them; the lesson is not to run after what is evil (remember, the Corinthians were indulging in their freedoms even at the expense of the spiritual lives of their “weaker” brothers and sisters)

7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND TO DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY.” **8** Nor are we to commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. **9** Nor are we to put the Lord to the test, as some of them did, and were killed by the snakes. **10** Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroyer.

- Exodus 32:6 - the idolatry while Moses was receiving covenantal instruction
- Numbers 25 - the moabite seduction leading to the idolatrous worship resulting in the death of 23,000 (plus 1,000 of the leaders)
- Put the Lord to the test: Numbers 21, passive-aggressively asked for food and water by complaining - the crafty way of the serpent brought about a plague of serpents
- Grumbled and killed by the destroyer - Numbers 16:41-50 - people grumbled because God destroyed Korah and his rebellion/ division
- Here Paul is calling out the issues he has addressed so far: idolatry (by causing weaker brethren to be tempted to idolatry), sexual immorality (the man and his father's wife), putting the Lord to the test (by indulging in the pagan temple gatherings because of their "knowledge"), and grumbling (the divisions among them)

11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. **12** Therefore let the one who thinks he stands watch out that he does not fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you except *something* common to mankind; and God is faithful, so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

- The point of Exodus and Numbers is not to look down on the Israelites but to learn from the example. Walk wisely so you don't lose your balance and fall by seeking social status, freedoms at the expense of other people's faith, personal advancement, and preferential divisions
- All these temptations you all are facing are common temptations to all humanity when humans go on the journey to the Promised Land, but God will show the way through, a path of escape from those temptations.

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. **15** I speak as to wise people; you *then*, judge what I say. **16** Is the cup of blessing which we bless not a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is the bread which we break not a sharing in the body of Christ? **17** Since there is one loaf, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one loaf.

- The meals in the pagan temples should not be more important than the meaning of the Lord's supper - the unity of the community of Christ with God as members of the divine family. We are the bread, the Body of Christ

18 Look at the people of Israel; are those who eat the sacrifices not partners in the altar?

- Example 1: the Levites, priests, and sometimes worshippers who eat part of the sacrifices are partners with the divine sacrifice? (Thus, why would you participate in a demonic altar to flaunt your “freedom” at the expense of a weaker brother?)

19 What do I mean then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? **20** No, but *I say* that things which *the Gentiles* sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become partners with demons. **21** 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. **22** Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

- Reminder: it is not the food itself or that the demons have real power, but by dividing the Body of Christ through insistence on your rights you are partaking in the worship of those demons.
- Do you really want to worship both Jesus and demons? How does God feel about that?

23 All things are permitted, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted, but not all things build people up.

- The Corinthians have likely written Paul’s own teachings back to him that “all things are permitted” in Christ, but they have misunderstood that to allow things that harm the Body. The goal is to self-regulate on the basis of love: what benefits and builds others up?

24 No one is to seek his own *advantage*, but rather that of his neighbor.

- The purpose of Christian freedom is to serve, not indulge

25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions, for the sake of conscience; **26** FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS. **27** If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions, for the sake of conscience.

- To keep the Corinthians from falling into legalism, he encourages them to eat meat set before them without trying to find out its origin - they are free to eat what they do not know is sacrificed to a false god. This is unlikely to cause someone to stumble.

28 But if anyone says to you, “This is meat sacrificed to idols,” do not eat *it*, for the sake of that one who informed *you* and for the sake of conscience; **29** Now *by* “conscience” I do not mean your own, but the other person’s; for why is my freedom judged by another’s conscience?

- If someone informs you it is idol meat, don’t eat it *for the sake of others*, not for your own sake.

30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered about that for which I give thanks?

- Do not slander anyone who eats food using this rule

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God. **32** Do not offend Jews or Greeks, or the church of God; **33** just as I also please everyone in all things, not seeking my own benefit but the *benefit* of the many, so that they may be saved.

- The point is to live in such a way that serves others and does not intentionally and unnecessarily offend the weak or the unbeliever. We want them to be rescued, not banished or proven wrong.

Chapter 11

1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

- In this way (living for others’ sake, regulating freedom so that others are not weakened or harmed, thus bringing glory to God and promoting the gospel) imitate the way I (Paul) do things, because I (Paul) am imitating Christ in this regard.

"For Paul, such imitation means one thing only: shaping our lives in accordance with the pattern of Jesus' self-sacrificing love. The imitation of Christ is, therefore, focused on the cross. This is precisely what the Corinthians were failing to perceive in their quest to affirm personal freedoms for themselves. Paul seeks throughout this section to impress upon them that life in the church is life in fellowship with those weak ones for whom Christ died (8:11). To live in such a fellowship is to find oneself called perpetually toward Jesus' example of costly service on behalf of others. This has always been a hard word for Jesus' followers to hear - from the time that PEter recoiled in shock from Jesus' prediction of his Passion (Mark 8:31-38) to the present. Authentic preaching of the gospel must always seek to discern where we are summoned to lay down our lives for others." ~*Richard B. Hayes, First Corinthians*

Reflections