

"The Church in the World:  
Studies in 1 Corinthians" No. 11

**"Essentials, Non-Essentials;  
Freedom and Responsibility"**

1 Cor.10:14-11:1

--CEFC 7/22/21; 4/26/98

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In this little booklet which introduces the Evangelical Free Church of America,  
after a statement of our core theological beliefs,  
there is a section on our distinctives--  
What are some of the practical principles that we hold dear?

And that section is prefaced by a quote  
that is often attributed to a fifth-century pastor and church leader,  
John Chrysostom  
(though, in fact, it may have actually come  
from a seventeenth-century Lutheran pastor<sup>1</sup>).

It goes like this:

*"In essentials, unity.*

*In non-essentials, charity.*

*In all things, Jesus Christ."*

I think it's a wonderful statement,  
and I have greatly appreciated the spirit that it reflects--

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<sup>1</sup> Ubertus Medenius

a spirit that drew me into my association  
with the Evangelical Free Church in the first place.

We seek to "major on the majors,"

We affirm our clear commitment to certain central points  
of Christian doctrine and practice,  
but we don't expect complete agreement on every fine point of Christian theology.

We affirm the need for godly living, as God has called us to holiness,  
but we do not lay down rules for every aspect of human activity.

There is a great scope for Christian freedom.

*"In essentials, unity.*

*In non-essentials, charity.*

*In all things, Jesus Christ."*

But as nice as this ideal is,

we have to acknowledge just how difficult it is to live out.

For, of course, the central question is,

what is "essential" and what is "non-essential"?

Where do we draw the lines?

What is allowed and what isn't?

And how do we deal with our differences on these issues?

These are not easy questions--

and the tendency through the history of the church

is to move toward one of two extremes--

On the one side is **license**,

in which no lines are drawn and no boundaries are established.

Anything goes.

You can believe anything you want to believe

and do anything you want to do.

Soon the church has no distinctive message to offer the world

and no distinctive life as a witness to the character of God.

Or on the other side, a church moves toward **legalism**--

in which all the T's are crossed and all the I's are dotted.

Every fine point of theology is firmly established,

and there is a rule for everything--

what kind of entertainment you can enjoy,

what kind of clothes you can wear,

what kind of books you can read.

The Christian life becomes a matter of living according to a new law,

and any notion of Christian liberty is lost,

and pretty soon, people start believing that their obedience to the law

is what will get them into heaven.

License and legalism are constant temptations,

but the truth is found in the way of Christ--

following his narrow path that leads to life

and avoiding the ditches that lead to destruction

on either side of that road.

And a case study of that way of Christ is given to us this morning

in our passage from chap. 10 of Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Our passage has two major sections--

in the first, vv. 14-22,

Paul deals with an essential matter

and gives an absolute prohibition,

affirming the importance of Christian purity.

But in the second, vv. 23-33,

Paul affirms Christian freedom,

refusing to lay down a law.

But in the process, he shows how that freedom

must be exercised responsibly and in love.

In our study of his passage

we'll seek to understand better how Paul makes these distinctions,

so that we might be better able to walk more clearly

in that way of Christ.

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Our passage this morning concludes Paul's long discussion of an issue

that was confronting the church in Corinth

and which he has been dealing with for three whole chapters,

beginning in chap. 8--

Was it proper for Christians to share in the meals held in the pagan temples?

And could Christians eat the meat that was sold in the markets,

but which had been sacrificed in those temples?

We pick up the letter in 10:14 right at the point at which

Paul is drawing the conclusion from the passage we looked at two weeks ago.

After considering the story of the sin of the Israelites in the desert  
after their Exodus from Egypt  
and the punishment of God that ensued,  
Paul gives an emphatic exhortation in v. 14--

**"Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry."**

This is Paul's conclusion concerning the issue of whether it is OK for Christians  
to go to the banquets in the local pagan temples  
to eat the sacred meals offered there  
with entrées consisting of meat that had been sacrificed to the patron god.

These enlightened Corinthian Christians,  
who prided themselves on their superior knowledge,  
argued that since there was really only one God  
and that what we eat has no impact on our relationship to him,  
then what difference would it make  
if they enjoyed such meals  
and took advantage of the social and commercial opportunities  
that they afforded.  
Why not share in these pagan festivals?

But Paul said No.

He had just warned them of the serious consequences  
that the Israelites suffered for their practice of idolatry,  
particularly related to the sacrificial meals they enjoyed  
and the immoral practices associated with them.

Lest they fall as the Israelites did,

Paul says unequivocally, "**Flee from idolatry,**"

which in the context is an absolute prohibition of their practice  
of eating the sacrifices in the pagan temples.

And in the rest of this section

Paul tries to explain why in his mind this is one of those essential matters  
about which everyone should agree.

He begins in graciously in v. 15—

"I speak to sensible people;"—

But is there a hint of sarcasm here?

"judge for yourselves what I say."

--but is he really saying,

judge for yourself that what I am saying to you is true!

Paul's argument uses a comparison with meals of three types:

First, the Lord's Supper which they celebrated within the church;

then, the Jewish meals in conjunction with sacrifice referred to in the Old Testament;

and finally the meals in the temple of the pagan gods.

The essential point of similarity is that each of them

creates a relationship of fellowship, or *koinonia*, among the participants

and between the participants and the deity that is honored.

Look first at the Lord's Supper--

v. 16--"**Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks**

**a participation in the blood of Christ?**

And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body,

for we all partake of the one loaf."

When we share in the cup and the bread in the Lord's Supper,

we participate in, we have communion with,

the blood of Christ and the body of Christ.

Now, I don't find any justification here for the view that when we eat or drink

we are actually eating and drinking the physical body and blood of Christ himself,

as many in the history of the church have believed.

That kind of divine participation was certainly not the case

in the next comparison Paul makes

with the Israelites in their sacrificial meals.

The participation in the bread referred to in v. 17

is clearly the bond between believers--

we participate with one another as one body—

the metaphorical body of Christ--

as we share together in the one loaf.

And as we share in the cup

we participate in the blood of Christ in the sense that we share

in his atoning work--his death on our behalf--

and the new covenant which that death has now established.

This sacred meal of the church

is one in which we celebrate that once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ,

as we eat in his presence, participating together  
in the benefits of that sacrifice  
and in the new community which it creates.

Every time we come to the Lord's Table for that communion meal,  
we are to look back to that sacrifice and to realize again its impact on our lives,  
and in that process, we recognize those who share with us in that meal  
as our partners,  
as our brothers and sisters in that one family of God.

There is a bond of fellowship, a communion, a *koinonia* in that meal  
that binds us to our Lord  
and to one another.

Paul will address the topic of the Lord's Supper again  
in the second half of chapter 11.

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Then, Paul moves to a second comparison in v. 18--

**"Consider the people of Israel:**

**Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar?"**

Paul is referring to certain meals prescribed in the Old Testament<sup>2</sup>

in which the people were to eat a meal in the presence of the Lord  
consisting of portions of the food that had been sacrificed on the altar.

There was never any hint that the food represented God in any way.

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<sup>2</sup>cf. Deut. 14:22-27.

Paul's point here is simply that by this meal  
the participants were bound together in their common worship of the Lord. /

After mentioning these two sacred meals which imply a participation, a bond,  
between those who share in them in their common worship of God,  
Paul's moves to apply this to the situation in Corinth.

But first he has to provide one crucial missing piece in his argument.

He doesn't want to affirm that the gods worshipped in the pagan temples were real--  
for there is only one God--  
but that doesn't mean that there were not real supernatural powers at work there.

And in v. 20, he understands pagan worship in terms taken from the Old Testament.  
In Deut. 32, Moses indicts the Israelites for their unfaithfulness in turning to idolatry,  
and he speaks in these terms:

**"They abandoned the God who made them  
and rejected the Rock their Savior.**

**They made him jealous with their foreign gods  
and angered him with their detestable idols.**

**They sacrificed to demons, which are not God-- " (32:16,17).**

This connection is found in several other places as well. <sup>3</sup>

So Paul says in v. 20--

Is an idol anything?

**"No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God,**

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<sup>3</sup> cf. Ps. 106:37; Isa 65:3 (LXX); 65:11 (LXX); Bar 4:7. cf. also Ps 96:5: "all the gods of the nations are idols," which the LXX renders "are demons."

**and I do not want you to be participants with demons."**

These sacred meals in the pagan temples of Corinth,  
just like the sacred meals in the church and in Israel,  
created a real fellowship among the worshipers--  
not with the pagan gods, which were not gods at all--  
but with the demonic forces that lay behind them.

Once this point is made,  
the conclusion is clear--

v. 21--

**"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too;  
you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons."**

Here we see the fundamentally exclusive nature of Christian commitment--

You cannot serve two masters.

In Greco-Roman religion, the more the merrier.

The pantheon of pagan gods could always accommodate another member.

In fact, it was considered a good bet to worship a number of gods  
as a way of diversifying one's spiritual investments.<sup>4</sup>

But the God of the Bible does not allow such religious promiscuity.

For the God of the Bible is the one God of heaven and earth,  
and he enters into a covenant relationship with his people  
that is as binding and as exclusive as any marriage ought to be.

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<sup>4</sup>So Hayes.

He is a righteously jealous God.

When he sees his people going after other lovers,

he will not let those who forsake him with such spiritual adultery

go unpunished.

Paul closes his argument, gently using the first person--

**"Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy?**

**Are we stronger than he?"**

In other words,

do we dare to challenge his authority in our lives

by participating in the worship of demons?

Sharing in the table of demons is simply incompatible with sharing in Christ's table.

You cannot do both.

This is a similar argument that he had used back in chapter 6--

Your bodies are members of Christ,

how can you also join them to the body of a prostitute?

These are not gray issues--

this is black and white.

Either you worship Christ, or you worship the demons of the pagan temple,

but don't think that you can accommodate them both

under one big religious tent.

It cannot be done. /

How we need to hear this in our day.

In our postmodern world, rational consistency is no longer important,

so you have some people who claim to be Christian  
yet also believe in reincarnation--  
or they claim to be Christian  
but also dabble in Eastern religions;  
or they claim to be Christian  
but they continue to worship Mammon on Wall Street.

Some things, Paul says, are simply incompatible with Christian commitment.

Some things must simply be prohibited.

Paul does just that very clearly in chap. 6--

**"Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters  
nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men  
nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards  
nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (vv. 9,10).**

These are not cultural issues--

these are absolutes.

They are all assaults on human dignity and the holiness of God.

We can base that conclusion on the clear teaching of the Bible,  
confirmed by the consistent witness of the church through the ages.

We may risk being called Neanderthal fundamentalists and hateful bigots,  
for not waving the rainbow flag  
and celebrating "alternative lifestyles,"  
but so be it.

Who told you that being a Christian would make you popular in the world?

These behaviors are so contrary to the character of our God  
and our covenant relationship with him  
that they must be prohibited.

Don't participate in the worship of demons.

**"Flee from all idolatry,"** Paul says.

On this essential of our faith,  
we must have full unity.  
We must guard Christian purity.

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I have to ask, What sort of "participation" should we avoid in our day?

Jesus was willing to attend the gatherings of tax collectors and prostitutes—  
without participating in any sinful activity.

Mere presence doesn't necessarily imply approval.

But does your presence at a same-sex wedding, for example,  
constitute a form of participation in what is clearly contrary to God's design?

I can easily see how it could be—

To attend a wedding is generally seen  
as supporting what is being done there.

It is possible that that would not be the case,  
but we certainly need moral discernment in such matters.

Our allegiance to Christ must not be compromised.

We dare not arouse the Lord's jealousy.

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Eating food sacrificed to idols in the sacred meals of the pagan temples was prohibited,  
but what about eating that same food  
which was later sold in the public marketplace?

That, Paul says, is another matter.

Here the issue is not the sacred meal which created fellowship with demonic forces.

Here the issue is simply food,  
and in this matter, there are no rules--  
instead, Paul advocates personal freedom.

You see, in a Greco-Roman marketplace,

most meat that was sold was left over from the temple sacrifices.

The pagan priests served as the town butchers.

The Jews strictly avoided such meat.

They were required to inquire about any meat they ate  
to ensure that it had been handled according to kosher rules.

One might have thought that Paul,

who was so against eating this idol meat in the temple  
would be just as adamantly against it when it was sold in the market.

But that wasn't the case--

v.25--"**Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience.**"

and in v. 27, "**If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go,**

**eat whatever is put before you<sup>5</sup>  
without raising questions of conscience."**

The history of the food you eat in those contexts is simply not an issue.

So, if you go to a grocery store today to buy a package of curry,  
don't concern yourself as to whether in some packing house in Calcutta  
that curry was once dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu.

It doesn't matter--don't worry about it.

Why?

v.26--"**for, [quoting Ps. 24] 'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.'"**

and again in v. 30--

**"If I take part in the meal with thankfulness,  
why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?"**

As Jesus had declared, no food is unclean in itself.

It is the attitude of the heart that matters.

Can you receive that food with thanksgiving as a gift from God?

That's what makes the food clean.<sup>6</sup>

Christ has set us free--

the Christian life is not about rules about what you eat or drink---

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<sup>5</sup>pa'n to; paratiqevmenon uJmi'n ejsqivete. cf. Jesus' words to those he sent out as missionaries in Luke 10:8--  
ejsqivete ta; paratiqevmena uJmi'n.

<sup>6</sup>cf. 1Tim. 4:3—"They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. 4 For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,"

**"Why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?"<sup>7</sup> Paul asks.**

We have to appreciate just how liberal Paul was on these kinds of issues.

He had grown up with a passionate concern to follow the law with regard to  
every aspect of life.

As a Pharisee, he would never have associated with a Gentile, lest he be defiled;  
he wouldn't have dreamed of eating meat once sacrificed to an idol--  
it was unclean.

But now in Christ, he has been set free from all that.

**"If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go--  
then go and enjoy yourself--  
eat whatever they offer you."**

When you go to the market,  
whatever may have happened to that meat before you buy it  
is of no concern to you.

Here Paul is denying that the origin of something determines its essential nature--  
that way of thinking is called the "genetic fallacy."

Just because the meat was once offered as a sacrifice  
doesn't mean that it is forever defiled.

Whatever its origin, when I buy it in the meat market,  
to me it is just meat, nothing more--  
and when I thank God for it, I can enjoy it without any moral qualms.

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<sup>7</sup>cf. Col. 2:16—"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day."

"Eat anything sold in the meat market," he says.

"Meat is meat; buy and eat," as one commentator put it.<sup>8</sup>

Paul is a free man with regard to such matters.

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But Paul also recognizes that his freedom

must never be joined to pride and selfishness,

such that he can simply do whatever he pleases

whenever he pleases.

In v. 23 he repeats the Corinthian slogan, "I have the right to do anything,"

and then qualifies it significantly—"but not everything is beneficial.

"I have the right to do anything"—

but not everything is constructive."

The Apostle offers two principles in our passage

that provide essential guidance on the exercise of our freedom--

The first, in v. 31, affirms that our freedom must always be used for the glory of God--

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,

do it all for the glory of God."

Don't do anything that will bring dishonor to God,

or that will in any way defame his name.

If you can't do it to the glory of God,

then you shouldn't be doing it at all!

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<sup>8</sup>So Fee.

And second, in the next verse, Paul affirms that our freedom

must serve to edify and build up others--

**"Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God--**

**even as I try to please everybody in every way.**

**For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many,**

**so that they may be saved."**

I am set free in Christ, Paul says, not so that I can do as I please.

I am set free in Christ so that I may become a slave of Christ in the service of others.<sup>9</sup>

Paul says, **"I try to please everybody in every way."**

Now, we have to take what he says here in the light of statements elsewhere

in which Paul condemns "people-pleasing preachers"

who bend the truth to suit the tastes of their audience.

Paul condemned that.

What Paul is concerned about here

is not simply not hurting anyone's feelings--

which in our PC culture seems to be an almost obsessive priority.

Paul's concern is with putting some stumbling block in someone's way

that would cause harm to the gospel.

His desire is **"that they may be saved,"** he writes.

To the Jews, he became like a Jew--and in Jewish contexts, presumably,

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<sup>9</sup>Gal. 5:13—"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

he would refrain from eating pork.

To the Gentiles, he became like a Gentile--

and in Gentile contexts presumably,

he might feel it improper to refuse to eat the pork set before him.

His behavior will have to vary, depending on the situation.

He may appear inconsistent to some people,

and they may criticize him for it,

but the real consistency of his actions is on a higher plane--

What will best serve the interests of the gospel

in the lives of the people he is with?

And he gives an example of this in our passage--

**v. 27-- "If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go,**

**eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience.**

**But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice,"**

**then do not eat it, both for the sake of the person who told you**

**and for the sake of conscience—**

**the other person's conscience, I mean, not yours."**

Now, who would make such a statement--

telling you, "**This has been offered in sacrifice**"?

Many think he is referring to a fellow Christian, the so-called weaker brother,

who does not share your freedom in this matter--

for his sake, do not eat--

for it may put him in the awkward position of following your example

and eating,

and so violating his conscience.

But it could be that it is a pagan unbeliever who says this,

one who assumes that Christians, like Jews, do not eat such meat--  
and he is trying to help you out--

*"Oh, by the way, I'm sure you'd like to know--*

*this meat has been offered in sacrifice.*

*I know you guys don't like that kind of thing."*

For him, your eating would appear to be a violation of your beliefs,

making you a hypocrite in his eyes,

and so bringing dishonor to God,

thereby putting a stumbling block in his way to becoming a Christian.

In any event, your eating or not eating in itself

is a non-essential matter—it is a disputable matter—

one in which the Bible is unclear

and on which Christians through the ages have been in disagreement.

In this non-essential matter your freedom ought to be exercised for the glory of God

and with a concern for its gospel impact

on the lives of other people.

And what this means for us is the need for charity in these matters.

We may well disagree on the precise course of action that is appropriate

in any given situation.

We will all need personal discernment

and corporate charity if we are to navigate successfully in these murky waters.

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Now let me be so bold as to seek to apply the principles Paul sets out here  
in some contemporary situations--

First, let's consider **the celebration of Halloween.**

Some Christians see this as an inherently demonic activity.

They look into the origins of the holiday--  
perhaps with the pagan Druids of Britain two thousand years ago,  
and its associations with the spirits of the dead returning to earth--  
and they conclude that participation by a Christian is prohibited.

Others see Halloween as simply a cultural holiday, involving dressing up in costumes  
and going around the neighborhood to collect candy.

I think Paul would say that Christians have freedom in this matter.

The origins of the holiday are not important  
so long as we don't engage in anything  
that is directly related to demonic activity,  
and we can give thanks to God for the candy we receive  
and not be a stumbling block for the gospel.

If I thought that my non-Christian neighbor considered trick-or-treating  
in some sense an association with the demonic, and they said,  
"This is a worship of evil spirits, you know,"  
then I probably wouldn't allow my children to participate

by knocking on their door.

It might confuse my neighbor about my exclusive allegiance to Christ.

But, in fact, Susan and I found trick-or-treating in our neighborhood

one of the very few opportunities

to make contact with our neighbors,

so by going with our kids, we might actually be heeding Paul's advice

to become like a Gentile among the Gentiles so that they might be saved.

In any event,

in this non-essential area, we must be charitable with one another,

and respect each other's views

and not lay down laws that we expect everybody else to obey.

We must respect Christian freedom.

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But let me talk about another contemporary issue that is just gaining prominence—

What about using a person's preferred pronouns?

We'll been dealing with this contentious topic of gender the next couple of weeks.

If a biological male declares himself to be a woman

and wants to be referred to as "she" and "her,"

do you go along with it?

Some Christians are adamant about it—

"No, never!" they would say.

To do so would be denying the truth.

And a Christian must always speak the truth.

It would be lying to call a he a “she.”

A man is a man and a woman is a woman. Period.<sup>10</sup>

More than that, using pronouns in that way

reinforces a false and destructive ideology that one’s gender is self-created  
and is disconnected from one’s biological sex.

For them, it is always wrong.

But others may disagree.

A pronoun doesn’t have to be understood to be making a metaphysical determination.

Using someone’s preferred pronouns may just be a form of

grace-filled kindness and courtesy,

showing respect for the feelings of the other person—

the kind of respect that is usually necessary for establishing a relationship.

Often these are people who have deep hurts and have experienced years of rejection.

You are not lying when you use words that way,

for there is flexibility in the way language works.<sup>11</sup>

I can see the case for such “pronoun hospitality,”

which may build a bridge rather than a wall

in my relationship with another person.

Generally, in such cases, I think I would try to avoid the use of pronouns altogether,

or maybe use the generic “they,”

but it’s not something about which we can make an absolute rule.

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Art. 11 of the Nashville Statement.

<sup>11</sup> See Sprinkle, *Embodied*, pp. 199-211.

We need to be aware of how what we say  
would be interpreted by others in each situation,  
as we seek to display the grace and truth of the gospel.  
As Paul says, "I try to please everyone in every way.  
For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many,  
so that they may be saved."

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But Paul's final word on this subject is found in the last verse of our passage,  
which unfortunately was made the first verse of a new chapter--  
11:1--"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

*"In essentials, unity.*

*In non-essentials, charity.*

*In all things, Jesus Christ."*

In all things, we follow the example of Christ,  
as that example is displayed in the Gospels  
and in the teaching of his Apostles.

Do you remember those bracelets  
with "WWJD" stitched in them?

"What Would Jesus Do?"

They were quite the fad for a while.

They were meant to be a constant reminder that this is what it means to be a Christian--  
to be a follower of Jesus Christ,

to walk in his steps.

He is to be our guide for living.

And the question, "What would Jesus do?" has to be answered

by looking at what Jesus did--

He trod that middle path between **legalism** and **license**.

He was in the world but not of it.

He was somehow able to embody both grace and truth.

He was criticized by the religious leaders--

because he didn't follow their rules.

Jesus didn't keep the Sabbath as they demanded,

he dared to touch unclean lepers;

he ate with the hated tax gatherers and prostitutes.

But at the same time, he fulfilled, he embodied,

all that the law of God was meant to teach,

living in a perfect relationship with his heavenly Father.

He was loved by sinners,

he sought them out and they were drawn to him,

but at the same time,

he was the Holy One of God without sin.

He was free,

but he gave up his freedom for our salvation.

He humbled himself in obedience to his heavenly Father,

and in love, he offered his life as a sacrifice for our sin,

dying on a Roman cross on our behalf.

This is what Jesus did--

now, as you look at the situations you find yourself in,

ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?"

*"In essentials, unity.*

*In non-essentials, charity.*

*In all things, Jesus Christ."*

May that be more than a slogan for us--

may it be a living guide to living out our faith in this world.

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Prayer—

Closing Song:

Paul says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,

do it all for the glory of God."

So we close with

#66 *To God Be the Glory* [1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> vv. with refrain

Benediction:

Phil. 1:9-11 [May] your love may abound more and more

in knowledge and depth of insight,

so that you may be able to discern what is best

and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,  
filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ --  
to the glory and praise of God.

"The Church in the World:  
Studies in 1 Corinthians" No. 11  
July 11, 2021

**"Essentials, Non-Essentials;  
Freedom and Responsibility"**

1 Cor. 10:14-11:1

Where do we draw the lines? What is allowed and what isn't? How do we deal with our differences? Christians of all ages have wrestled with these questions, and the twin dangers of legalism and license are ever-present. The Christian ideal is set forth in a statement important in our EFCA heritage: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, charity; and in all things, Jesus Christ." In our passage this morning, Paul seeks to work this out in dealing with issues facing the Christians in Corinth. We will need to work them out in our culture as well.

**I. In Essentials, Unity (10:14-22)--**

*"Flee from idolatry"*

**Guard Christian Purity**

**II. In Non-Essentials, Charity (10:23-33)--**

*"For I am not seeking my own good"*

*but the good of many, so that they may be saved."*

Respect Christian Freedom

III. In All Things, Jesus Christ (11:1)--

*"Follow my example,*

*as I follow the example of Christ."*

Let Christ be our Guide.

Sermon Response:

**"Essentials, Non-Essentials;  
Freedom and Responsibility"**

1 Cor. 10:14-11:1

- Consider Paul's words on the nature of the Lord's Supper in vv. 16,17. Reflect on the participation or "fellowship" that binds us together when we share in that meal as a church. What difference should that make in our relationships with one another?
- Read vv. 21,22. In what areas are we in danger of provoking the Lord's jealousy? What contradictions are present in our loyalties and activities?
- Read vv. 25,26,30. What is the basis of Paul's freedom to eat whatever is put before him? In what ways could this principle give you freedom?
- In what ways should your decisions about how to behave be related to the goal of v. 33--"so that they may be saved." What have you done recently with that end in view? Ask God to show you what this might mean for you today.
- Meditate on 11:1. What would it mean for you today to follow the example of Christ? Ask yourself at least three times today, "What would Jesus do?"