

# *Iglesia de Carne*

## Studies in First Corinthians

### Text

First Corinthians 10 - 11:1

### Topic

Paul tells the believers in Corinth that the ends of the ages has come and he urges them to follow him as he follows Jesus

### Title

***“One Day They’ll Look to See We’re Gone,  
For Tomorrow He’ll Reign  
and So I’ll Follow God’s Son”***

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Gerald Ford was an athlete in his youth, took care of himself all his life and was still in great shape when he came to the White House. After he slipped one rainy day and fell headlong down the stairs coming off Air Force One, he developed the reputation for being a klutz. SNL and other comics had a field day.

You can go on-line and see hilarious compilations of celebrity trip-and-falls. Some falls are not funny:

- Dr. Robert Atkins, of Atkins Diet fame, died on April 17, 2003 in New York from head injuries suffered in a fall near his office. He was 72.
- Dave Freeman, whose book *100 Things To Do Before You Die* inspired the film *The Bucket List*, died after hitting his head from a fall at his home. He was 47.



**Serious “falls” were a problem in the church at Corinth.** Spiritual falls. In verse twelve we’ll read, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he **fall.**”

Comparing church age believers to the Israelites in their Exodus, Paul will say that they, “SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY” (v7).

Sit... Stand... Fall. It was a pattern of behavior in Corinth that needed to be corrected.

It should be replaced with what Paul encouraged in the first verse of chapter eleven:

1Co 11:1 (NIV) Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Sit... Stand... **Follow** is the pattern Paul provided to replace Sit... Stand... Fall. It will make more sense as we work through the chapter. I’ll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Take Heed To Not Sit, Stand, and Fall**, and **#2 Take Heed To Sit, Stand, and Follow.**

### **#1 - Take Heed To Not Sit, Stand, and Fall (v1-22)**

Satan sits on a throne. At least, he did in the first century, so probably he still has one today. In the Revelation Jesus told the believers in the church at Pergamos, “You dwell where Satan’s throne is” (2:13).

I don’t know where Satan calls headquarters today.

I do know that you don’t want to sit down with the devil, or any of his principalities and powers, or his rulers of the darkness of this age. *But that is precisely what Paul told the believers in Corinth they **were** doing by dining in the pagan temples where the food was first ritually sacrificed to gods.*

Paul began to address the issue with several illustrations from the Old Testament.

1Co 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,  
1Co 10:2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,



1Co 10:3 all ate the same spiritual food,  
1Co 10:4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

The believers Paul was writing to were mostly Gentiles, but they had a good knowledge of the Old Testament. Before looking at the particulars, here is Paul's point: **The Israelites were God's supernaturally delivered people who used their freedom to indulge themselves and thereby were falling into sin. As God's supernaturally delivered people, we should take heed and not do likewise.**

- Moses delivered the Israelites from bondage to Egypt. They were "baptized into Moses" means that they identified with him as their deliverer by passing through the waters of the Red Sea. In the wilderness, the Israelites ate and drank supernaturally supplied food.
- Jesus delivers us from bondage to sin. A Christian is baptized into Jesus Christ. We have spiritual food and water to sustain our walk.

1Co 10:5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

*What an understatement of the facts.* All of them who left Egypt who were over the age of twenty died in the wilderness, over a period of four decades. All, that is, except two - Joshua and Caleb.

1Co 10:6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

1Co 10:7 And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY."

This is Paul's quick summary of the famous incident in Exodus involving the making and worshipping of the Golden Calf. They sat and drunkenly feasted around the newly-forged idol. When they stood, their feasting turned into an immoral orgy.

1Co 10:8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;

This incident is from later in their history, recorded in the Book of Numbers. Moabite women came into the camp of the Israelites and the men were having



sex with them. It brought upon them a judgment from God in which “twenty-three thousand” were killed.

1Co 10:9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;

In Numbers twenty-one the Israelites complained against Moses because all they had to eat was manna. God sent snakes into the camp - fiery serpents who bit the people and many died.

1Co 10:10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

Numbers sixteen records that when the people complained against Moses a plague came and destroyed many of them. Taken together, these incidents from Jewish history describe perfectly what the believers in Corinth were doing:

- They were attending feasts to the idols reminiscent of the Jews feasting around the Golden Calf.
- Some of them in Corinth were engaging in sexual activity with the temple prostitutes, similar to the Moabite women coming in to the camp of Israel.
- The Corinthians were adding the wisdom of the world to the things of the Lord. Like the Israelites, they were not content with God’s provision of spiritual food and drink and were looking for other sources.
- They were complaining against Paul and suggesting he wasn’t a ‘real’ apostle. Not unlike the complaints of the Israelites against Moses and his leadership.

1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

The things we read in the Old Testament are “examples” to “admonish” us in our walk with the Lord. We ought to take heed to them because we are those “upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” “Ends of the ages” can be translated *the fulfillment of the ages*. It means that we are to think of ourselves as living in the last days when the return of Jesus to resurrect and rapture the church is imminent.

1Co 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

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First Corinthians 10 - 11:1

*“Tomorrow He’ll Reign and So I’ll Follow God’s Son”*



The believers in Corinth thought they had good spiritual posture, and a strong walk, and could handle sitting at the pagan meals. Paul was strongly admonishing them that they were headed for an injurious spiritual fall.

1Co 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

This is one of those wonderful go-to verses. Let's make sure we understand it. "Temptation" here means *trial* or *testing*. The way Paul used it is of some trial that comes upon you that God then uses as a testing. Two things help us put trials into proper perspective:

1. First, they are "common to man." Trials are to be expected in this fallen world. They are commonplace. We should therefore not think it strange when trials come.
2. Second, trials are never beyond your ability to "overcome" *with God's help*. There is always either "a way of escape" or the promise of supernatural empowering "to bear it."

You can trust God to provide help in a trial that He has not necessarily originated, but that He has allowed.

Gordon Fee writes, "Paul's point, then, is that in ordinary human trials one can expect divine aid. There is no danger of "falling" here. **But it is otherwise with idolatry.** The "way out" in that case is simply put [in verse fourteen]," Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."

Listen: When you choose to behave wrongly, it isn't a trial. I've talked to believers who feel they are being persecuted at work when the truth is, they are lousy employees.

1Co 10:15 I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.

This could be sanctified sarcasm, but since we can't really know, let's receive it as an appeal to sanctified common sense.



1Co 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

1Co 10:17 For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

This, by the way, is *not* a teaching about communion. Paul was simply using communion as an example. When a Christian participates in the Lord's Supper, he or she is sharing in fellowship with the Lord. It is more than just eating and drinking.

1Co 10:18 Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

"Israel after the flesh" is referring to Jews under the Law of Moses. When a Jew brought his sacrifice, part of the meat would be offered to the Lord. Part of it would be given to the priests for them to consume. And part would be consumed by the offerer.

Both the Lord's Supper and the temple sacrifices were times of fellowship. Paul applied this principle of participation to the pagan feasts that the Corinthians were attending.

1Co 10:19 What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?

1Co 10:20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

Earlier Paul had indicated that an "idol" was, by itself, "nothing" compared to God. However, sitting down in the temple of the idol and participating in the ceremonies was something more. The idol might be a thing of wood or stone but behind all idolatry is the devil, who desires to be worshipped. Food sacrificed in the pagan temples is, in fact, being sacrificed to demons. And because of the principle of participation, if you are there, you are fellowshiping with demons, whether willingly or unwillingly.

1Co 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.



They couldn't have it both ways. They must choose the Lord over idols. It wasn't a gray area.

1Co 10:22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

Participating in the ceremonies at the pagan temple would be like going out on a date with someone who is not your fiancée.

Paul's statement, "are we stronger than He?", was a rebuke to those whose argument was that they were so strong in the Lord that participation in the pagan ceremonies was no big deal. Instead of seeing how near you can come to idolatry see how far you can keep away from it.

How does this apply to us, in America, where our restaurants are mostly not sacrificing the lasagne to idols? Normally I'd talk about idolatry in general. But that is, well, too general.

How about this. It's been said that you become what you worship. I think that's true, to a point. It gives us an excellent way of examining ourselves with regards to idolatry in our lives.

Simply put, *Who or what am I like?* Another way of putting it - *Who or what am I becoming like?*

If I am like or becoming more like the world, more interested in material things, less interested in serving the Lord by a real sacrifice of my time, talent, and treasure, then it is a pretty good indicator I am sitting in the wrong places.

If, on the other hand, there is growing spiritual fruit in my life and ongoing spiritual service that actually costs me something, then it's obvious I am taking heed to not stand and fall.

## **#2 - Take Heed To Sit, Stand, and Follow (10:23 - 11:1)**

Growing up, there were four channels: ABC, CBS, NBC, and KTLA Channel 5 in Los Angeles. There was no remote. And school was uphill both ways.

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First Corinthians 10 - 11:1

*"Tomorrow He'll Reign and So I'll Follow God's Son"*



On those channels, I was warned to not smoke by the famous “Like Father, Like Son” public service ad:

- A dad is painting the side of the house; his young son mimics him.
- Dad is driving the car; his young son is in a little seat with his own steering wheel. (NOT a car seat, mind you; he could be ejected any moment. Or rear-ended and burn to death in their convertible ‘65 Mustang).
- They wash the car together.
- Afterwards they go for a walk and throw a few stones.
- Then it happens. While sitting for a rest, dad lights up. He sets the pack down on the ground... The boy picks it up. The narrator bemoans, “Like father, like son? Think about it.”

Imitation can, however, be good - especially if you imitate the apostle Paul.

1Co 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

1Co 10:24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*.

I am to always seek the well-being, the good, of others over my own good. Always. Period.

Verse twenty-three shows the principle in action guiding my decisions.

“All things are lawful for me” means that all the things that are morally neutral and not specifically condemned by the Bible are in the realm of liberty. But since I am seeking the good of others over my own, before I participate in any liberty I ask myself two questions:

1. Is this liberty going to be “helpful”? In the context it seems to mean, “Is it going to benefit others?”
2. Is this liberty something that can “edify”? The word means *to build up*. Once again it is building-up others, not myself, that I should be concerned about.

Whatever might be on the current cultural list of gray-area liberties available to me needs to be tempered by whether or not my participation in them will benefit and build-up others.





What follows, in verses twenty-five through thirty, is a series of practical situations that the Corinthians found themselves in. Paul put the principle he had just established into action. The first situation was meat being sold in the public marketplace.

1Co 10:25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake;

1Co 10:26 for "THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL ITS FULLNESS."

It wasn't the meat. It was eating it in the temple of the idol. He added a quote from Psalm 24:1. Since "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness," then the meat belonged to Him before it was ever sacrificed to an idol. If it was good to eat before the sacrifice, it was good to eat afterwards.

The second situation is a private dinner in the home of nonbelievers.

1Co 10:27 If any of those who do not believe invites you *to dinner*, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.

You're invited to the home of nonbelievers. You might "desire" to go in order to share Jesus with them. In that case, "eat whatever is set before you." Don't ask if the meat was sacrificed to an idol. *Don't act weird!*

1Co 10:28 But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL ITS FULLNESS."

The nonbeliever informs you that the meat was sacrificed to an idol. Why would they? Because they have some idea that, as a Christian, you might have a problem with it. That it might be off-limits to you. In that case, so as to not confuse the nonbeliever, you ought to abstain.

Why does Paul repeat the quote from Psalm 24:1? I think he means it in this second application to say that there is a lot to eat and drink that is not questionable. Eat or drink something else so as to not confuse your nonbelieving host.



1Co 10:29 "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another *man's* conscience?

Paul tells you it is the "conscience" of the "other" person, in this case the nonbeliever, that he was talking about.

"Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience?" In other words, If my conscience is clear, why should I submit my behavior to the conscience of someone else?

1Co 10:30 But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for *the food* over which I give thanks?

I might be free to partake and give thanks to God for my liberty (in this case, food). But I don't want to risk being "evil spoken of" for some liberty I exercise in the presence of the nonbeliever.

This happens all the time. I often hear a nonbeliever say of someone, "He claims to be a Christian but I saw him...", and then they mention some behavior from the list of questionable practices.

Remember that Paul was dealing with the issue of meat sacrificed to idols. Sure, it could be eaten. But the nonbeliever might have a hard time understanding why. After all, it just took three chapters to try to explain it to Christians.

1Co 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1Co 10:32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,

1Co 10:33 just as I also please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

To the glory of God, guided by the Gospel, so as to "give no offense," which here means to create an obstacle, thereby stumbling someone. That's your life principle.

1Co 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.



Paul wasn't being proud, saying he'd arrived. He was simply saying that he applied these principles in his walk with Jesus, and that they were successful in both keeping him on the narrow way, and winning people to salvation.

So... Where am I sitting, spiritually speaking? Ask yourself, because where you're sitting will determine whether you fall or follow after you stand.

