

Lake Cities Community Church  
January 30, 2011  
Pastor Craig Schill  
Series: 1 Corinthians

**“Walking the Line”**  
1 Cor 10:14-33

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A traveler entered a new town and came across some elderly men playing checkers at the general store. “What are people in this town like?” the traveler asked. “What were they like in your town?” the older men replied back.

“In my town they were angry and mean - couldn’t stand them.” Said the Traveler.

“Well, that is pretty much like they are here, too” they said with a frown.

A second traveler came into town, a woman, she came upon the same old men, and she asked: “What are people in this town like?”

“What were they like in your town?” came the same reply.

“Oh, They were friendly and nice and wonderful people!” She gushed. The old men responded with a smile, “Well, that is pretty much what you will find here, too.”

What is the moral of this story? The moral is that **your character will follow you** – it will follow you to your neighborhood, to your school, your business and to your church. Your character will define your experiences in those places, and in the end, define those places themselves. The Apostle Paul’s desire is to build a godly church. But the church is made up of many members; and the members of the church at Corinth (as we have seen) are prideful, divided and foolish – and they have built a prideful, divided and foolish church. Paul’s can’t change the church until he change the people. Therefore Paul has been called

the people to grow up spiritually and to grow in maturity. Paul longs for some spiritual progress and growth – from immaturity to maturity.

## **REVIEW:**

Because today we are finishing a major section of the book, chapters 8-10, I want us to review what we have learned so far in this section. You may recall the main question is the following: *“Is it OK to eat meat that may have been sacrificed to an Idol?”* To this question, Paul has affirmed the meat eaters, teaching that Idols are not real and there is only One God – so eating meat is fine. It is not a problem – not a sin.

However in the same breath Paul warns those who are eating meat to remember that not everyone has the same knowledge, and if their eating causes another to stumble in their faith – then they have misused their freedom. Remember the principle we have seen several times: “Just because you can do something, doesn’t mean you should!”

“Here is the deal,” Paul says: “knowledge is not the controlling value, love is. Knowledge is great – sound doctrine is important; but in matters of opinion it will divide the church. But love, always, always, always, builds up the church.

In chapter nine, Paul says, “Let’s not forget here what is really important and it is NOT eating and drinking but the Gospel of Christ.” Like a runner in a race – that is our goal and motivation. Paul taught us: “Make the tough decisions necessary to Live intentionally for the gospel, and you will enjoy its blessings.”

Finally, in chapter ten, in preparation for today’s passage, Paul exhorts the church to resist temptation through the strategies of example and escape. Learn from the examples of others (don’t make the same mistake) and look for God’s way of escape.

And that leads us to today's passage, 1 Corinthians 10:14-33. In today's passage Paul takes ALL these previous topics and weaves them together into his conclusion. We begin with a discussion about idolatry – which will lead back to the issue of meat.

### **UNITY AT THE LORD'S TABLE**

1Cor. 10:14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 1Cor. 10:15 I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. 1Cor. 10:16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 1Cor. 10:17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. (Paul goes back to Israel as an example) 1Cor. 10:18 Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?

Paul's main point is that we have unity at the Lord's Table. When we eat together, we are all symbolically taking Jesus into our bodies through bread and wine. As different as we may be from one another – at the Lord's Table we express unity – we are ONE body as we share from ONE loaf and ONE cup.

In 1999 over 300 people in central Illinois fell seriously and suddenly ill. Twenty-two had to be hospitalized. They all tested positive for e-coli bacteria, which is associated undercooked or contaminated meat. The Health Department swooped in and discovered that all the people had one thing in common. They had attended a large Labor Day festival in the town of Petersburg. Of the 1,800 people at the festival, those three hundred all shared something else in common – they all ate from the same hamburger vendor, and the vendor was serving undercooked contaminated meat.

To share something good and pure is a blessing, but to share in something contaminated will cause you harm. Now with regard to idols – verse 19:

1Cor. 10:19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 1Cor. 10:20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 1Cor. 10:21 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. 1Cor. 10:22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

## **RESPECT THE LINE**

Let me explain what is going on. This is where we come to the title of my sermon – walking the line, which I will explain in a few minutes. First, nearly all the meat available in Corinth had been sacrificed to an idol at some point – whether it was bought in the marketplace, served in a person’s home or at a social gathering. And in all these places, so far, Paul has said if you have a clear conscious – go ahead and eat. It is OK! And, Paul here reiterates this freedom, verse 25: 1Cor. 10:25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience’ sake. Verse 27: 1Cor. 10:27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience’ sake. Don’t ask. Don’t tell. If your conscious is clear – eat the meat.

But now we see there is one exception!!! A place and time where it is NOT Ok to eat the meat. And that is if you participate in the actual temple ritual. For example, if the Temple of Apollo in Corinth dropped a door hanger on your door inviting you to their

Saturday Sacrificial Praise Service at 7pm with free food for all. IF you go, to THAT service – NOW you have **crossed the line** into sin. Everything before that was OK – but if you actually participate with the sacrifice, you are sharing in the worship of demons.

IF you like the music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, that is fine. If you root for BYU football. No problem. IF can develop a meaningful relationship with a Mormon missionary or neighbor – fantastic. But if you get invited to participate in a Mormon Baptism for the Dead Service – do not go. Because you may just be sharing with demons, which is sin.

Here is how the line works: Meat in the marketplace, fine. Meat in the homes, OK. Meat at a social event, cool. Meat at a pagan temple – you have crossed the line into sin. **This “Principle of the Line” is extremely important for us to understand and highly practical in the Christian life.** It not only applies to meat, idols and false religions but nearly every area of life.

Food, for example, is great. We all love to eat. But an excess of food, can lead to what? Gluttony or idolatry. You can cross the line into sin. Alcohol is not in itself sinful. Drinking a little alcohol will not inhibit your relationship with God or commend you to God. But an excess of alcohol can lead to drunkenness which is clearly a sin, it is over the line. Watching TV is a very common activity, but too much TV can lead to materialism or envy (or sloth). Dancing is fine, and even has a great biblical tradition. But dancing in certain ways can lead to immorality. If you pick any issue where some freedom in Christ can be expressed, you will find out there somewhere is “the line.”

Paul put it this way: “[1Cor. 10:23](#) All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Solomon said it this way [Prov.](#)

25:16 If you find honey, eat just enough — too much of it, and you will vomit. Once in college my roommate and I had a contest to see how many Big Mac hamburgers we could eat. I love Big Macs – they are awesome! But as we ate more and more we became sick. Be careful that you don't cross the line into sin.

One more important point: **The reality of the line must be respected.** You may not like the fact that there is a line. Or you may not like the placement of the line, but you must respect the biblical reality of a LINE!

In the history of the Christian faith some people have sought to push the line to justify sin. They do damage by calling clear areas of sin “freedom”. Such people have been called libertines in church history. On the other hand, there are also those who want to pull the line in. They do damage by calling legitimate areas of freedom “sin.” These people in church circles are called legalists. As Christians we must respect the line, which means don't push the line – and don't pull the line

## **LIVE ACCORDING TO LOVE**

I think we are beginning to see that while the essential doctrines of Christianity are simple, living out the Christian life in the real world can be complex and requires a healthy dose of wisdom. How do we walk the line with wisdom? How do we live not as a legalist and not as a libertine? Paul tells us as he wraps things up: 1Cor. 10:24 Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor. 1Cor. 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1Cor. 10:32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 1Cor. 10:33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my

own profit but the *profit of the many, so that they may be saved*. Paul is reminding us that the controlling value for the church is love. Walk according to love, look out for other people - and you will build up the church and avoid sin.

### **Application:**

When I was 16 - I was in a traffic accident; fortunately not too serious, but I was turning left on yellow, and I thought I had a clear intersection when a car coming toward me decided to try to make it through the light - just as I stepped on the gas to make the turn. The car swerved and barely missed me but hit the car in front of him. But the accident was my fault, because I cut it too close. I didn't yet have the right-of-way.

This leads me to our application - think of the image of the traffic light. Red means stop, green means go, and yellow is caution! Slow down! When you have freedom in Christ, it is a green light! Enjoy it but don't abuse it. When you come across sin - it is a red light - avoid it - resist temptation. And when you come to the line -that is a yellow light - don't gun the car - slow down, come to a stop, or else you are likely to get into a spiritual accident.

Let's together, walk the line with wisdom, enjoying the freedom we have and for which Christ died, yet avoiding sin from which we have been set free, and resisting the temptation to cross the line into sin. Let's pray.