

*“Christian Liberty, Legalism and the Glory of Christ
in the Local Assembly – Part III”*

1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

God’s glory is to take center stage in the celebration of Christian liberty. All issues of Christian liberty must come under the shadow of the cross. In verses 10:31 through 11:1 Paul will summarize his primary ideas concerning Christian liberty.

I. The purpose of Christian Liberty (10:31-11:1)

Here Paul gives three guiding purposes in the use of one’s Christian liberty.

A. The glory of God - The pattern to do all to God’s glory
(v. 31 [Do everything to the glory of God])

We have made the idea of giving God glory very insubstantial. We have no idea as to what it means and thus have no idea as to what it looks like. We must give this idea “teeth.”

Whether you eat the meat or do not eat the meat or whatsoever you do, do it with God’s glory in mind. Yet what do we mean when we say, “Glorify God?” Children give their parents glory when they through their conduct bring them honor.

We honor God when we reflect His character in our actions. This is the essence of biblical worship.

Think of Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” When I put God’s honor first, then I will put the desire to see other people satisfied in Him paramount in my life. When I put God’s honor first, then I have made Him enough in this life and in the life to come.

To glorify God is to affirm and to celebrate who He is and His work. We cannot add to His glory, we can only affirm and celebrate it. God is glorified in my home when I put my wife and children above my own preferences and pleasures. God is glorified at the work place when I put the interests of others before my own. God is glorified in the church when I place the building up of the body over against my own preferences and pleasures. God is honored when I am so satisfied in Him that I treat those around me as God would want them treated.

God is glorified and honored when we seek the good of all men.

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- B. The good of man - The pattern to maintain proper relations to all men (vv. 32, 33 [Give no offense])

Here he summarizes what was stated in verse 29. Be careful so that you do not cause others to stumble.

This same idea is expressed in Romans 14:13. In the statement “Jews, Greeks, or to the church of God” the apostle covers every possible option. It is not just the believing, but also the unbelieving that we do not wish to place before a stumbling block.

In the statement “I also please all men in all things” the apostle Paul has not become a man-pleaser. Rather Paul says, “I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22 [See 1 Cor. 9:19-23]).

His third principle is found in 11:1.

- C. The godly example - The pattern to follow the apostolic example (11:1 [Be followers of Paul])

Why did Paul not simply say, “follow Christ” instead of “follow me as I follow Christ?” Perhaps it was to put in front of the people a tangible expression of the Christ life. Obviously Paul is not saying follow me in the absence of following Christ.

What constitutes a godly example? How would you and I describe someone who is godly? What set of characteristics or qualities would make someone godly? I personally believe each of our lists would be different. There might be overlap, but no two lists would be identical. Let me suggest three ideas from Mark 8:34-38.

1. Denial (He must deny himself)
2. Death (Take up his cross)
3. Discipleship (follow Me)

What does this look like (vv. 35-38)? The text gives us three simple statements as to how a godly example plays out in “real” life.

- For what or whom do you live (v. 35)?
- How do you view your possessions (vv. 36, 37)?
- Are you ashamed and/or vocal about being a Christian (v. 38)?

Our individual and collective testimony inside the fellowship and outside the fellowship can either bring honor to God or cause Him to be despised. May God move us to radiate Christ to one another and to the community at large.