

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1 CORINTHIANS LESSON 4 (Chapters 8-10)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1). I’m Timothy Sparks.

Ben Bailey:

And I’m Ben Bailey. Welcome to our study of First Corinthians. We are so glad that you have tuned in to our broadcast today. As always, we would like to offer an invitation for a free copy of our lessons on CD or DVD. All of our lessons are available free of charge. All you need to do is let us know which ones you would like. Visit us on our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form to let us know which lessons you want, and we will be more than happy to send those to you. Also, we have streaming audio and video lessons on our website. You may download these and use them to assist you in your study of God’s Word. That’s what today’s lesson is all about—each of us coming to the Word of God to study it in order to learn what God wants us to do. We also would be glad to send you the first lesson of an eight-lesson Bible correspondence course. You will receive it by mail, and after you have completed lesson number one, you can return it to us for grading. We then will send you back that lesson (graded), along with the next lesson, and so on. At the end of the course, you will receive a “Certificate of Completion.” We believe this could prove very beneficial to you in your study of God’s Word.

As we enter our study of 1 Corinthians 8, Paul is going to show us that knowledge—just for the sake of knowledge itself—puffs up, but love builds up. Paul is not trying to teach that knowledge is not good, for Jesus Himself said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32). The type of knowledge Paul has in mind here is an “inferior/superior” knowledge. Here is what I mean by that statement. Certain people have a superior knowledge. That is to say, they know more than others. Maybe they know the Bible better than others, and so they pat themselves on the back and look down on others who perhaps don’t possess as much knowledge. Specifically, Paul is probably talking about the eating of meats. There is nothing wrong with food. Paul teaches in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 that food is sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer, and that **any** food that is according to God’s will can be eaten. But what about those foods that were available in the marketplace, and that at one time had been offered to false gods? The food itself is not evil. As long as we do not accept the idol worship as correct and genuine, then, for a brother who knows that—who possesses that knowledge—he has no problem eating such foods. And what about the weaker brother who has just become a child of God? If he knows that the meat was offered to idols, he may think in his mind that some association between idol worship and the meat still exists. Eating that meat could therefore cause him to fall or stumble. Paul is going to say, “If meat is going to cause my brother to stumble,

then I will never again eat meat.” How far should we go in making sure that other Christians don’t stumble? **As far as it takes!** As far as it takes to teach them and to help them understand. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 8:11, Paul makes the point that if we sin against the weaker brother, and cause his conscience to be against God, then we also sin against Christ. How severe is it? When we cause others to sin, we also cause ourselves to sin. Timothy, doesn’t this passage teach us that the Christian example has to be the utmost example, and that we must make sure we don’t cause anyone to fall?

Timothy Sparks:

Yes, and Peter also talks about this. He speaks of growing in the Christian graces, and of how, if we do these things, we will never stumble. However, not only will we ourselves not stumble, but we also won’t cause others to stumble. So, once again Paul is dealing with the motivation of love for a Christian brother or sister, and how we should not cause the weaker brother or sister’s conscience to be harmed. Paul discusses this same thing in Romans 14 and 15. He says, “We who are strong ought to bear with the weaknesses of those who are weak, and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1). He then appeals to Christ, Who did **not** please Himself, but Who, rather, was crucified for us—for you, and for me! As we examine the parallel passages in the New Testament, we see that is always a matter of love. But isn’t that how Paul begins the section of Scripture we’re studying? “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” Paul shows us that love is what will cause us to have other people’s best interests in mind—lest we cause a brother for whom Christ died to stumble and to fall from God’s grace. So we must be very, very careful about our influence. When something may not necessarily be wrong, but someone else perceives what you are doing to **be** wrong, and thus stumbles in his or her faith, then you have violated the royal law of love. We are not talking about things that are clearly wrong from a scriptural standpoint; rather, we are talking about things that someone “perceives” to be wrong. In the context of 1 Corinthians 8, if someone was to see you buying meat in the marketplace, and they believe that the meat had been offered to idols as a sacrifice, then, to them, you are, by association, participating in this pagan act of worship—when you are supposed to be wholly dedicated to Christ. Paul says, in essence, that he does not want to be viewed as having participated in any worship other than that to the true and living God. So, at the heart of this matter is **genuine concern** for another brother or sister.

Ben Bailey:

Now, in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul is going to be discussing the idea of defending his apostleship, and defending his right to live off of the Gospel. Some were making accusations against Paul, and possibly suggesting that he wasn’t working as hard as he should, or that maybe he wasn’t a “real” apostle, or that perhaps he should not be getting paid to preach the Gospel. He basically sums up the issue in 1 Corinthians 9:12-14 by showing that those who **preach** the Gospel also should **live off the Gospel**. Paul commented on this in Galatians 6:7 where he said that those who **communicate** the Gospel have a right to live off of those who **receive** the teachings of the Gospel. This is not something to be abused—and perhaps some were doing exactly that (and may be even today). Some in Paul’s day were claiming to be teachers of the Gospel, and may have been receiving a salary for doing so, when they weren’t really teaching the truth or doing the work they should have been doing. Paul reminds them that he hadn’t even taken a wife along with him, or enjoyed some of the family privileges that others (like Peter) had enjoyed. He said, “I’ve suffered as a result of the Gospel of Christ, and now you want to accuse me of being a fraud?” Paul says, “This is **not** the case. I’m simply trying to **live off** the Gospel

so that I can **preach** the Gospel.” This is a very basic passage about paying those who preach and teach the Gospel. Yes, the preacher has a right to be paid. Should he take advantage of others? No, not at all. Many times you’ll see people speak on television, and just about everything they say is about **you** giving **them** money. That’s not what Paul is trying to get at. Paul just wanted to live. He just wanted to survive, and live another day, so that he could preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If that’s what a preacher is focusing on, then he has every right to be supported, and supported well, by the congregations of Christ. But, that man must live correctly and set a good example. Paul told Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6-12) to be an example in his teaching, in his work, in his conduct, in his love, in his spirit, in his faith, and in every way. He has to show that he’s not in it just for the money, but that he really loves the souls of other people. And so in this section of chapter 9, we see that Paul said he had a right to be paid. Timothy, tell us what the rest of chapter 9 deals with.

Timothy Sparks:

As we look at the next section of chapter 9, we see that Paul embarks on a discussion of becoming all things to all people, that by all means he may save some. He talks about the fact that, to the Jew, he became a Jew—meaning that he was able to talk to the Jews from the Old Testament scriptures to show them Christ. He says that, “to the weak, I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all people that, by all means, I might save some.” Some might want to come to 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 and say that “the end justifies the means.” Some might say, “Well, I go to bars so that I can win people who are at the bars.” Obviously, Paul isn’t talking about that. Some people even say, “I participate in social drinking so that I can engage people in a conversation in a social setting about the Gospel.” Paul never did teach such a thing, or suggest that it was approved in God’s sight. Paul was willing to reach out to a person at the place in life where that person found himself—such as a person who was weak in his conscience or mind. And Paul was willing to forego a number of things so that he could win people and lead them to Jesus Christ. Again, Paul is stressing to us the importance of genuine love. But we should **never** go beyond what is written, as Paul has already stated (1 Cor. 4:6). We are to stay within the limits, the confines, of New Testament Christianity. Paul was one of the greatest personal workers this world has ever seen, because he had the kind of love that motivated him to empty himself. Paul will say to the Christians at Rome that he even would be willing to be **accursed** from Christ if it could possibly mean the salvation of the souls of the Jews. This is the type of love Paul had—so that he “might save some.” Paul’s life was spent in the saving of souls. He told Timothy, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world **to save sinners**, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 4:15). Paul recognized that Jesus came and gave His life for your redemption and for mine. Paul will now spend his life in seeking to lead other souls to Jesus Christ. Jesus came “to seek and save the lost” (Lk. 19:10). And so Paul will later say to the Christians at Corinth, “I will gladly spend and be spent for your souls.”

Paul says that the reason he is willing to become all things to all people, that he might save some, is for the Gospel’s sake. Paul makes a very similar remark in talking about his various persecutions and the trials he had endured. He said that the things that had happened to him had “turned out for the progress of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:12). Everything that Paul was doing was aimed at spreading the Gospel, the soul-saving message of Jesus Christ. Now, in 1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul is going to show that he had to make sure he was living his life correctly. Paul said, “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” Here’s a basic lesson: the best sermon preached is a life well lived! We need to realize that as speakers

of the truth, and as those who claim to teach others, if we teach others not to curse, not to speak in an ungodly way, and to control their tempers, and then they see us do the exact opposite by “flying off the handle” and saying things that we shouldn’t, think about how hypocritical that is. Paul is teaching us that when we preach to others, we’ve got to look to self first. As preachers preach the Gospel to others, they should remember to look at “self” first. They should make certain that their life is right. Paul wanted to look at himself, and make sure that before he preached anything, he made that lesson apply to himself. Many times, people do not respect a preacher because they know that in his own life, things are not right, and that he is not following his own teachings—which he claims are from the Word of God. This is a basic lesson about self-discipline and self-control. Every one of us in life has temptations, and certain areas in which we might be more sorely tempted. What makes us different from those in the world is that we make sure we strive and struggle to overcome those temptations. Whether my temptation is becoming angry and “flying off the handle,” or whether my temptation is sexual lust, Paul says to us that we must discipline ourselves. And here’s the key idea. We must discipline ourselves **daily**. It’s not something that we do once a week. It’s not something that we do in preparation for the teaching of the Gospel. Our discipline occurs on a daily basis. Every day, we have to remind ourselves that Satan is like a lion, seeking whom he may devour, and that he is very crafty. Paul says that he can even appear as angel of light with many devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Realize every day you live that Satan is trying to tempt you, and to cause you to fall away. In light of that, remember to discipline yourself daily. We live in a world that doesn’t like the word “discipline.” When it comes to children, and restraining them from doing ungodly things, we don’t like to talk about discipline very much. Friends, the Bible teaches us that there are certain things that we have to make sure we don’t do. And we have to train ourselves and teach ourselves **not** to do those things. This is what Christianity is all about. It’s about training ourselves to have the mind of Christ so that we won’t fall away. In chapter 10, Paul focuses on some who fell away.

Timothy Sparks:

As we look at the preliminary discussion in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul is giving them the concept that we are engaged in a race—the race of life. We are not engaged in trying to obtain a perishable, earthly crown, as some are. Rather, we are running the race of life to obtain an imperishable, eternal crown. This, then, leads Paul into the discussion found in chapter 10. In this context of trying, and striving, and making every possible effort to make it to Heaven, he then tells them a lesson from Israel’s history. He tells them that God duly and appropriately provided for them. He allowed them to drink of the spiritual Rock—and that that Rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). So, God was helping them all along. Paul makes it clear that we should not engage in the practices in which they engaged. They tempted God. They ate and drank, and rose up to play. Then he says, “Let us not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did.” And so he’s telling us that as we run the race of life, God is the One to Whom we are to be faithful. We must not forget that God is our Protector. He is our Guide. He is our spiritual Provider. If we turn from the commandments of God, we will tempt Christ. If we engage in sexual immorality, then we will be cut off from Christ, because, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). So, Paul makes it clear that the lessons he is presenting in chapter 10 are given to us as an admonition, an encouragement, so that we do not have to repeat some of the mistakes of history. We learn here, as we do from such Old Testament passages as 1 and 2 Kings, that if we fail to learn from the mistakes of the past, we are doomed to repeat them in the present. One of the greatest lessons we can learn from the Old Testament is that when God’s people disobey, they are always punished. Paul tells us

that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). It’s eternal and spiritual death—separation from God. So, through lesson after lesson, we must learn from the mistakes of history. We must look at the good examples of people who followed the Lord, and how richly He blessed them.

Ben Bailey:

One of the lessons that we’re going to learn from 1 Corinthians 10:12 is that a child of God **can** fall away. It’s very clear from this passage that Israel, as a nation, was God’s chosen people. They were God’s children, yet they fell away. There’s a popular doctrine in the religious world that says, “You cannot fall from grace.” One of the great things about the inspiration of the Bible is that, thousands of years before men make up their doctrines, God has already made the plan, and His Word has already said what is true and what is not. In the example of the times of the people in the wilderness, we see that those people **did** fall away, they **did** tempt Christ, and they were **destroyed**. They fell from God’s grace. Today, the same thing can occur. When people live a life of sin (not an occasional sin of which they repent, but a continual life of sin), they can fall from grace. Paul comments on this in Galatians 5:4-6 when he says, “You who would be justified by the law, **you have fallen from grace**. You have become estranged from Christ.” The Bible could not make this point any clearer than it does in Galatians 5:4. Paul said, “You have fallen from grace.” This is the exact opposite of what many are saying today. And it’s important to note that Paul is talking to **Christians**. The Galatian letter was written to churches in the area of Galatia. He says to those people (who were Christians), “Some of you have fallen from God’s grace.” This is a very clear teaching of the Bible. Simon might also be another good example. In Acts 8, the Gospel comes to Simon’s area. Simon is baptized. Then he sees the gifts of the Spirit, and his heart is not where it needs to be. He desires to purchase the gifts of the Spirit with money, so that he can make more money with those gifts. Peter then tells Simon that he is bound with iniquity, that he has sinned, and that he has fallen. Simon, in Acts 8:20-23, asks that Peter pray for him, and Peter told him why he **needed** someone to pray for him—because his money was going to perish with him. Notice that Simon was going to perish. Simon was going to be lost. One lesson we need to learn is that we **can** be lost if we continue in a life of sin. If we sin occasionally, but we repent, 1 John 1:7 informs us that “if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” We must be careful about how we live our lives. Timothy, isn’t this a lesson that is taught over and over again, even from the very beginning of time—that when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they fell from God’s grace?

Timothy Sparks:

Throughout both Old and New Testament history, we see time and time again that God makes it clear what people should do to live in accordance with His Word and with His will. When people transgress the law of God, they sin. And sin is that which separates us from God. “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Is. 59:1-2). In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul, writing through inspiration, makes it clear that we must take heed, lest we fall. But he goes on to say, “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.” So, in every situation involving temptation, there is **always** a way of escape. But we

must resist the devil, so that he will flee from us (Jas. 4:7). If we will resist him “steadfastly in the faith” (1 Pet. 5:9), then we will be able to “send our foe packing.” Just as Jesus was able to accomplish that by saying “It is written..., it is written..., it is written...,” so can we (Matthew 4). This is the very thing the first-century Christians did. They overcame him [the devil] through the blood of the Lamb [the blood of Jesus Christ] through the word of their testimony [the Word of God] because they did not love their lives to the death [they were willing to die for the cause of Christ] (Rev. 12:11). We today can overcome sin, Satan, and self, through the blood of Jesus Christ, and through the Word of God, if we are willing to die for the cause of Christ. We do not have to be overcome by sin, but can resist it—just as Jesus did. If we are “in Christ,” then we “can do all things through Christ, Who strengthens” us (Phil. 4:13). We can make it through any and every situation, and we can make it through any and every temptation.

Dear friend, if you are not a Christian, if you have never obeyed the Gospel, the Book of 1 Corinthians appeals to you. It tells you that God loves you, and that He sent His Son to die. The text in 1 Corinthians 5:7 teaches us that Jesus is indeed our Passover, and that if we are a part of Him, death (in a spiritual sense) will “pass over” us. If you are not a child of God, we plead with you to obey the Gospel plan of salvation—not as you see it in the religiously divided world of today, but as you find it in God’s Word. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1:10, teaches that **division is not a part of God’s plan**. It’s a very simple plan—a very easy plan to understand. Paul said that when you read it, you can understand God’s will (Eph. 3:4). The same is true for us today. The Bible teaches very clearly that one must believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Believe in Him with all your heart, as Acts 8 teaches us in the case of the Ethiopian nobleman. Jesus Himself said in John 8:24, “Unless you believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins.” Remember the golden text of the Bible: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). Believing is the first step, but it’s not the **only** step. I also must be willing to change my life. When I become a child of God, the major thing for me is that I change from the old and turn to the new. Peter told those people in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...” (Acts 3:19). I must make a 180 degree turn from sin to God, and then I must live a life of faithfulness. I’m reminded of the words of Jesus in Luke 13:3, “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” And so, I must believe. And I must repent. Then, the Bible also teaches that I must confess Jesus as my Savior. In Romans 10:10, Paul taught, “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” I must orally confess Jesus as my Savior. Then I also must be baptized for the remission of my sins. In Acts 2:37-38, we read, “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.’” This is what Jesus Himself said in Mark 16:16—“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” Once again, we want to thank you for joining us in our broadcast today. If you would like a copy of our broadcast today, we will be happy to send it to you. Go to our website, www.thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form, and we will be happy to send the broadcast to you free of charge. As always, it is our prayer that, as we study together, you will endeavor to discover more of “the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ.”

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 CORINTHIANS LESSON 4 (CHAPTERS 8-10)

1. When Paul said that he never again would eat meat if doing so could endanger the faith of another Christian, what was the point he was trying to get across? Elaborate especially on the concept in today's society about people's "right" to do something.
2. Relate your answer in the above question to Paul's statement in Romans 15:1, "We who are strong ought to bear with the weaknesses of those who are weak, and not to please ourselves." Where does "Christian charity" (love) fit into this?
3. What is the main point of instruction presented in the parallel passages of 1 Corinthians 9:12-14 and Galatians 6:7?
4. Paul said that he, personally, had striven to "become all things to all people, that I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:20-22). Explain what that **does** mean, and what it **does not** mean. Then, provide a modern-day example of how you, too, could "become all things to all people, that you might save some."
5. What is involved in "spending and being spent" for the Gospel? Does this apply **only** to individuals who are paid from the church treasury for their services? If not, why not?
6. When Paul observed, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27), what was his message to the Corinthian Christians (and thus, to us, too)?
7. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul used an analogy of a "race" that Christians are running. What is that race? And what is the prize if we complete it successfully?
8. Paul stressed that "knowledge puffs up..." (1 Cor. 8:1), and "let him who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Superimpose, as it were, those two passages, and explain what the apostle is trying to get across to the reader.
9. A common doctrine in the religious world today is referred to as "once saved, always saved." Explain what that doctrine teaches. Then, using Paul's discussion from 1 Corinthians 10:12 (and his parallel discussion in Galatians 5:4), discuss whether the doctrine is true or false.
10. Are there any examples of people in the New Testament who were Christians, yet who "fell from grace?" If so, list some of them.
11. Paul once described Satan as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). Peter referred to the devil as a "as a roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). It is obvious from such designations that Satan is powerful. Knowing that, what is the importance of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 10:13?
12. Explain the importance of the Word of God in resisting the devil, being sure to discuss Jesus' temptation by Satan in Matthew 4, and James' statement James 4:7.
13. What is the lesson taught in such passages as Revelation 2:10 ("be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life") and Revelation 12:11 ("they did not love their lives to the death")?