

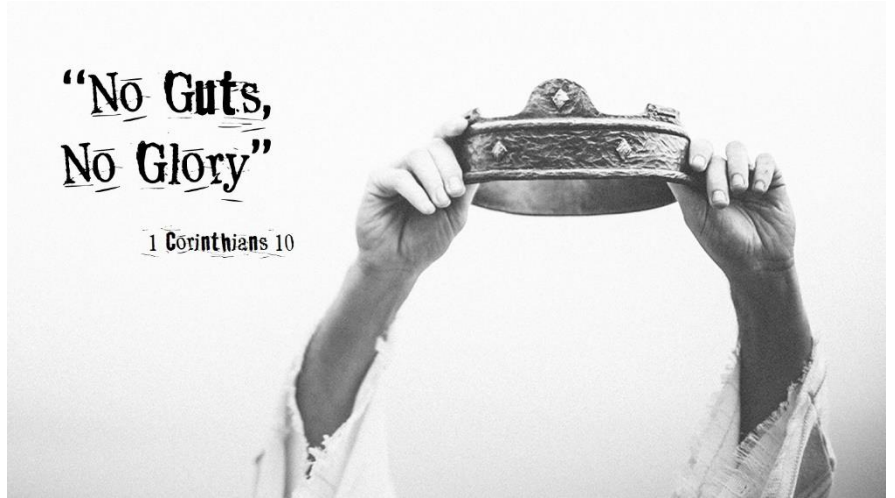
“No Guts, No Glory...”

- 1 Corinthians 10 -

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at JF Believers Church
in Menomonie, Wisc
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“No Guts,
No Glory”

1 Corinthians 10



1 Corinthians 10 *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 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." 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 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. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 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. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 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? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. 18 Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? 19 What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 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. 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. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? 23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being. 25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; 26 for "the earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness." 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. 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." 29 "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? 30 But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? 31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, 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.*

Verse 31 tells us “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.**” How do we do that? What does it take to bring “glory to God?”

When I was growing up, I struggled with the trust in my salvation, because such was never a surety. It was a 'church taught doctrine' for which I did not question in my youth, but thankfully was rescued out of upon my adult spiritual maturing and by some careful biblical teaching by people who came along side of me to instruct me according to the scriptures and not according to a church denominational position. Now having grown with greater clarity on this subject, I have found peace in the understanding that I am secure by grace through faith, and it is Christ alone who redeems me and furthermore *keeps me saved*. This trust has made a dramatic difference in my growth and maturity as a disciple and as a man.

Now, as the years of ministerial walk have marched on, while still seeing the damaging aspect of the lack of salvation security, I have witnessed an equally...*if not greater damning understanding*, that one is securely saved even though multiple red 'flags' are evident in a persons living. In other words, someone who believes they ARE saved, though there are serious issues that should rightfully be raising questions in an individual's mind and yet is not.

Chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians is for me, like driving along and coming upon a terrible accident. I drive by slowly...not wanting to see the devastation but being unable to look away. As a pastor/shepherd, I am inexplicably drawn back to this chapter again and again. How vivid and real for me are the thousands of bodies that are strewn about in the wilderness of this world. Real lives...people who had talents, gifts, and promises of future blessings and they blew it. So much had been offered to them...so much to look forward to, and they lost everything simply because of their pride and lust for what would eventually kill them all. They pushed to the limits of God's tolerance and they lived on the danger edge until finally disaster came.

There were the bodies of those who thoroughly rejected God's oversight, as well as the bodies of those who believed themselves to be ok with God but were not. The end seems to be the same for them both. How many of us carry our faith in our back pocket, secure in the idea that if we need it, it will be there for us. Scripture is clear that a person may think and even say he is saved, but he may be wrong. Saying and thinking do not make a person safe and secure in Christ. Saying and thinking are not the reality or the evidence of salvation. A person may be baptized and belong to a church, but baptism and membership in a church do not make a person safe and secure in Christ. In chapter 4 of this letter, Paul rather sarcastically indicts their smugness. In verse 8 he says, "*Now you are full. Now you are rich. You have reigned as kings without us.*" Very sarcastic: **aren't you something?** They thought themselves to be invincible. They were abusing everything, every privilege and blessing they had. They thought that they could just about do anything they wanted to do.

A person may partake of communion and think he is thereby safe and secure in Christ, but partaking of the bread and juice do not make a person safe and secure in Christ. A person may sense the presence of a *supernatural being*, or be greatly gifted and very active in the church, but it is not these things that make a person safe and secure in Christ.

This was the problem with the Corinthian believers. All of these things were true of them, and they thus felt safe and secure in Christ, but Paul is shooting a warning flare off in attempt to cause them to stop and consider: ***were they really ok?***

Today the pendulum has swung wildly in the other direction where the abuse of God's grace is widespread and the new baseline is denominational positions and a socially accepted paradigm. Salvation has been painted as something that is acquired by saying a magic "sinner's prayer" with some level of church attendance to follow, throw in some moral aspirations and that makes a person a "Christian." Because of widespread biblical illiteracy and an adaptation of the "new" version of faith that is not based on what Jesus Himself said, what we corporately have is far from true Biblical Christianity...the only faith that actually saves.

The last chapter made one point abundantly clear. The Christian believer is actually in a race for his life...a race for an incorruptible crown in eternity (1 Cor. 9:24-27). The crown of life does not come to us on a *silver platter*.

According to Paul, a person must *run* to win the race. It's a run in discipline, that encompasses the denying of oneself and his worldly life. It's easy to say to yourself, "*Boy we're really the blessed. I mean, look at us, God's just pouring out everything on us, we're special,*" and get quite comfortable. And then you start to play with your freedoms, and you start moving out to the edge of God's tolerance, into a place you could be disqualified and so could this whole church.

(10:1-4) The emphasis in this passage must fall on the word "all." God's redemption of the people of Israel out of Egypt is a vivid picture of the spiritual redemption of mankind out of the world through the cross of Christ.

There is a strange phenomena that I have often witnessed in the dynamic of the local church...yes, even *our* local church. It's the "herd" mentality...the "osmosis" effect. The position that because I attend services, participate in group dynamics, serve in a ministerial endeavor, get baptized and maybe even become a covenant member or go on a mission trip, that all of that assures my position with Christ. Paul is warning the Corinthians believers in chapter 10 of this letter that nothing could be further from the truth.

Paul speaks of all those who came out of the bondage of Egypt. He points out that all of them passed through the same sea...all were protected by the cloud that covered them and led them by day. They ate the *same* spiritual food...drank the *same* spiritual drink...and were "baptized" in unity. And yet, despite it all...most of them...*note again the magnitude of this description...MOST...*God was not pleased with and they died out there in the wilderness and never saw, never knew, never experienced, the promised land. They all *began* their journey the same way, but how each individually ended varied according to some other measuring stick...some other aspect.

However great was their privilege and their blessings, none of it apparently guaranteed their success. They each had so much within their reach, and yet the vast majority never saw the promises of God. Three million people had received God's blessing and redemption from Egypt: *from the world*. Yet only **two** ever found their way into the Promised Land, the true and full blessing of God. Three million of them went through all the motions and yet they never experienced anything but manna day in and day out and endless wanderings around and around in circles in the wilderness until they died.

What happened there? How did this occur? Perhaps the answer lies in the historical and practical evidence that while their *bodies* left Egypt their *hearts* remained there. But Paul was giving more than a history lesson. The righteous application to our wider, modern church is unavoidable. The call even to our own local fellowship begs to be heard. How many of *us* have "left Egypt," only to remain there in our hearts? We, no doubt, quickly cry "*Oh, no! Not us!*" But let us ask ourselves truthfully, "*where are our hearts today?*" The way we live our lives, express our passions, and embrace our priorities tells us where our hearts truly lie.

Let me simply ask you concerning your own reality. Step back from it for a moment. Where are you today? IS your life just eating the same manna day in and day out? ARE you in the promised land or are you just out there wandering a round and a round in the wilderness? Hmm...*how do I know for sure?* Well, the promised land is a place full of great joy, blessings, and purpose, while also fraught with giants that are fighting against you everyday. It is a land of extremes. The *wilderness* on the other hand is aimless, repetitive, boring, yet moderately "safe."

Mt 6:21 "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*"

(10:6) Paul reiterates one of the grand purposes of scripture, which is to present a picture of things to come. Those historical events as well as the reiteration of such is to serve as a warning...a "teaching moment." A "historical lesson." It is clear that we are, as Romans 1:20 says, "*without excuse...*". Three million people lost their lives—at the very least to teach us a lesson! There is so much to lose if we repeat such an error!

Even after being brought out of Egypt, we can continue to lust after the benefits of that world, the "leeks and

onions” we left behind. They were not satisfied it seems with what God had given them...what he was offering, and though they despised and complained about the wilderness life, they at the same time still lived in fear of moving beyond such and into a realm where there were giants to fight.

Instead of facing the giants with God on their side, they preferred to play it safe. They preferred to wander their lives away in relative safety albeit spiritual obscurity. They never knew the full promises of God. They never knew what they were born to be and do.

(10:7) What lust did not steal from them, idolatry took from them. Instead of moving forward into the blessings and the *battles* of the new frontier, the account records that they “sat down.” This was the beginning of their demise. They tried to just “stop.” Instead of seeking God’s direction and fulfillment, they spent their time *eating, drinking, and playing!* Clearly they had lost their way home, not by accident, but sadly *on purpose!*

Today, just like then, the vast majority of us are deceived *intentionally*. It’s not that we don’t know where we are supposed to be. We just refuse to go on in with God, and instead find comfort and “new gods” in this perceived middle ground, which is not our home, it’s just “wilderness.” Such a place is not a place to *live* but rather only a place to *die*. Not only is it not what God saved us from Egypt for, but let us take a true look around *-it is still only desert!* We may have relative safety and are taken care of, but it’s still only manna, and it’s still only a desert.

Let us remember the specifics of the story: the Israelites’ foray into idolatry was a golden calf they *actually thought was something made in honor of Jehovah*. It seems *they* decided what God should be like ...and after all, they were free, *right?* But that freedom led them to make God something out of their own imaginations. Their “freedom” killed them.

(10:8) After lust and idolatry take their toll, it is anyone’s guess where we may find ourselves. Spiritual defection always leads to moral defection. It is like King David’s odyssey: he never started out to commit adultery, not to mention *murder!* It started with lust and idolatry, followed by failing to go to battle where he was supposed to be...then stopping and *sitting down*, which then led to some overt “playing.” It ended with sexual immorality, and the cost was *enormous*. It was enormous for David, *and* for 23,000 others who died in the wilderness.

Certainly this issue of sexual immorality was a sin that was well known in Corinth, just as it is today. They had to have known that Paul was on to them here; he was not just preaching to hear his own voice.

(10:9) What is this verse 9 about? Well, it seems the Israelites, the church in Corinth, *and perhaps even we ourselves*, thought God would not exercise some discipline over these actions. We would say today that they “pushed their luck.” Their thinking may have gone something like, “*God loves us right? So He wouldn’t do anything to us that would cause us pain or would be viewed as correction, right?*” Or maybe it was “*I’ll get it together and move forward one day...I just want to play for awhile.*”

What amazes me personally is that it is clear what that road brings a person. After all, we have all seen it ten thousand times...*over and over*. And yet there is always some dumb schmuck that thinks it will be different for them. They believe they can embrace the world and find the satisfaction and fulfillment that no one has ever found. They can stick *their* hand in the fire and not get burned. I wonder if it’s something in the water...because from where I am standing, it’s a fools errand. Still a line is queuing out there to give it a shot. Not me. I want more for my life.

Oh, how many in the greater church today are guilty of such a misconception? To believe such is to ignore the God of the Bible and His historical interaction with His children. It’s a lie. The churches that are sanctioning the golden calf are sending thousands to their death, and possibly to hell with their flippant abuse of grace.

Let me ask you this: How many of us have knowingly committed gross transgression with plans to ask for

forgiveness afterwards? This is called pre-meditated repentance! Except it's not repentance, and it won't work. Your heart states clearly by such a plan that you do not love the Lord, and you are not a Christian and you are lost in the wilderness...

(10:10) Its interesting, that there is pattern to all of this. A linear path that is beaten down by all those who have gone before us. One sure aspect in the midst of this chaos, is the sin of unthankfulness and murmuring. This is where division and complaining against God's divine leadership comes along. This verse harkens back to Numbers 16:41-50. That episode obviously ended badly. 14,700 people died in a plague from God. No doubt the Corinthian church was guilty of the same sin, and Paul was addressing it, not from *his* position, but from *God's*. Their battle, as was that of the Israelites with Moses, was ultimately against God, and that is a battle that never ends well for us.

(10:11) The bottom line here is that all of these things happened to the Israelites because they did not want to go where God wanted to take them. All of it because they *were not* where they were supposed to be! They chose to wander instead of obey, and they chose to be afraid instead of bold in God's strength. No Guts...and no glory for God. When we fail to move into the place God desires us to go, we will, without a doubt, experience these same things. This happens, not because God has failed *us*, but because in our refusal to obey, we fail *Him*.

We are told that these things are recorded as examples to us and are written for our admonition, a warning and reproof. Yes, God *does* warn and reprove us. This is His love in manifest. He tried to warn those who came out of Egypt but they would not hear Him. How many of us are failing to see the fruit in our lives, the joy in our faith, the peace in our hearts? Perhaps the sins of lust, idolatry, immorality, pride, and division against leadership have found root in your heart? Stop and take a look around. Is that sand between your toes? Maybe that's because you're in the desert.

(10:12) Here we have a final warning to the self-confident among us. No doubt it is the one who thinks he or she is a strong believer who can dabble with self-gratification. It is the one who thinks he can find peace and joy in the world when no one has ever succeeded. Most people will ignore this warning. Most people *did* ignore it, and paid a heavy price. Flagrant sin always comes at a high price. Sometimes it's a price we can rebound from, but sometimes, sadly, it's not.

Mark 10: 29-30 tells us the bold truth: *"Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property — along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.*

But do you have the guts?

PART 2

(10:13-14) After twelve verses of warning, Paul now brings a glorious word of encouragement and blessing. Innumerable souls throughout our days have turned to this passage to find strength and boldness in times of testing.

Make no mistake: God does not *tempt*. He does, however, allow temptation to occur in order to strengthen us and expose to each of us the weakness of our souls. He does however promise to not allow temptation to be greater than we can endure, greater than we are able to triumph over. I know that each of us have questioned the truth of this promise, as well as His promise to "provide a way of escape." We tend to think that such is not true in our case, yet invariably it is because the "way" that He is providing is thoroughly rejected because...*well,*

that would be really really hard and quite possibly embarrassing.

Thankfully, He protects us every moment of every day. Truth is, if He took away His hand from us, we would not even be able to hold on to our very breath. Satan would take our very life if allowed. However, if God failed to allow such times of testing, we would also never grow up, never mature, never move beyond who we are today. We would never learn who we really are and what we are capable of. We would never learn to lean on Him and allow Him to lead us.

Temptation to sin is a condition common to all men, and so are the very issues we are tempted by. Even Christ Himself was “tempted in every way as we have been tested.” We are promised here that God is faithful. Thankfully He is faithful “even when we are not.”

2Th 3:3 “*But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.*”

2Ti 2:13 “*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*”

(10:13-14) God does not shield us from all temptation, but He will provide a way of escape. Isn't the reality of the situation most often that we simply don't like the escape we are given? The truth is, the way of escape is often to run away! Isn't there a way we can give in to the temptation *and* please God? No, **there isn't**. The fact that He *did* give us the way out only clearly establishes our guilt when we fail to take it.

He tells us to flee. It isn't glamorous and it isn't going to stroke my ego, but it works ...*if* we actually do it.

1Ti 6:11 “But thou, O man of God, *flee these things,*”

2Ti 2:22 “*Flee* also youthful lusts:”

1Co 6:18 “*Flee* sexual immorality...”

There are many ways to avoid falling to such temptations. It may be to turn it off, get rid of it, or lock it down. But it is almost guaranteed to be a very hard thing to do. He says it will be a *way* of escape. It doesn't say an *easy* way out. Because it won't be.

Paul goes on to call them “beloved” and tells them to **flee** from idolatry. His words are not corrective here as much as they are spoken out of his love for them. Paul was the quintessential pastor. He was corrective when it was called for, but always compassionate towards God's children.

(10:15) Paul was trying to appeal to the wisdom he knew resided within them. He did not demean them or beat them down. He simply asked them to look inside themselves and judge honestly whether all of this was God's honest truth.

(10:16-17) Paul gives a beautiful picture of the true spiritual meaning behind our traditional communion. Our taking of communion symbolically joins us together as one body...and further, one with Christ, the cross, and His greater task upon this earth and thereafter. His joy, His blessing, and yes, even His pains. *His* road becomes *ours*. In a nutshell, that encompasses Christianity in its simplest form. Because of this profound picture of communion, we generally offer it only in the Covenant Community. Even in that, such is not perfect, for I know we will always have those in our midst that don't really mean it. But in my world, taking communion is serious business. It is a testimony that will “hold our feet to the fire.” Those that *did* take communion here and did *not* mean it, are now gone or on their way out. God will see to that.

Paul uses the vernacular “we” here. This message is not to some high elite pastoral group. Not some sort of chosen few, but to *everyone* who says there are in the pool. All of us who join together in communion of the essence of Christ. *Together* we drink the cup of blessing. And *together* we drink the cup of His trials and His

death. This is true communion. ***This is Christianity.***

We are, though we are many, **one body**. I wonder if we even come close to understanding that. I ask because I have often witnessed some folks take a chain saw to that body and it ain't pretty. We are all partakers of that "one bread." We are **of Christ**. We are to be **one**. Pulling together, battling together, living together. And we aren't to leave a man behind...

Paul speaks of Israel and the Jewish nation in verse 18. Of the temple sacrifices that were made prior to the great and final sacrifice, a portion was given to and consumed by the priests. With part of the sacrifice being consumed by the fire and the other part being consumed by men, the offering then symbolizes a unity of spirit and cause with God.

All of this is a real act of worship. But what is worship, really? Throughout scripture we see a principle dramatically presented: worship is an action, not just some sort of subjective feeling or just singing and raising our hands. In this, we find the inherent and innate makeup of worship. Worship requires action on my part.

(10:19) Paul was trying to turn the eyes and the hearts of the people toward God and away from all of the other things that had come to stand between them and God. He was asking a pertinent question: Are their sacrifices, *their actions* to the idolatry of their world worth anything at all? All the idolatry going on around them, did it mean anything? Did it come to anything of value?

(10:20-22) The sacrifices ...the acquiesce, to the idols of the world, according to Paul were simply a nod to demons, whether the people were willing to acknowledge such or not. It's all the same today. People think they can partake in Jesus community while still worshipping at the feet of modern idols and that they will receive from both the bounty of blessing. But such offerings and worship are empty and meaningless to God, and...knowingly or unknowingly, the latter are given to the demonic.

And of course, Paul doesn't want the believers in Corinth to have any fellowship with demons. He states for their clarity and for ours, that you cannot have both. You cannot worship both the Lord and the world. We cannot call ourselves Christians and still worship at the table of the world that is the realm of Satan. There are only two sides. There is no middle ground.

We like to think God has endless patience and will let us keep running away forever. However when we try to divide our allegiance, we provoke God to jealousy. Then everything around us starts falling apart. No one lasts out there in the wilderness. They simply roam a round and a round in circles and finally just die.

(10:23) Paul had been talking for some time about a persons freedom in Christ...our liberty under the umbrella of Christianity. He is not talking out of both sides of his mouth and herein trying to take away everyone's freedom and grace. He is, however, putting a face on it. Because either direction my friend there is a cost. He is trying to give some perspective for a believer trying to worship the true and living God while walking in this world. This pertains to believers who are literally walking daily around altars offering worship to the demonic realm, as well as the lethargic church goer that is just trying to stay "safe"...even if that means a lifetime eating manna and wandering around in circles going nowhere.

He states clearly that we are indeed free. We have to note that "all things" does not include the things expressly declared as sin in scripture. Paul has been addressing the things not directly prohibited in the Bible, and may be free for us to engage in even if they are "weights" that slow us down. Just because I am free to indulge in these things does not mean that they are good, that they build me up, or that they glorify God.

(10:24) Paul's direction in this is that the decision on whether we choose to partake in one thing or another must not emanate from our own will or desires, but rather what is 1) good for us...making us stronger and faster. 2) what is good for those around us and their spiritual development and well being. Remember...**one body!** And 3) what ultimately brings glory to God. All of these three considerations can be difficult. But remember...no guts,

no glory...*as in glory for God.*

This does not mean we are to have no self-care or preservation. You cannot do anything for anyone if you are dead or living in a box somewhere. But we cannot operate in a vacuum either. No one is an island. Every action has an equal reaction.

(10:25-28) Paul returns for a moment to the issue of meat offered to idols. He hasn't really ever left the subject but just simply expanded on the practicum of such an issue. Indeed, it was highly possible that some of the meat sold in the market was "second hand" offerings to idols. He was saying that they could hyper-analyze every instance of this occurrence, or they could eat and be thankful to the true God for what they were receiving. So, *eat and be thankful*. However, if someone comes along and is troubled by your indulgence, then stand down and do not eat.

(10:29-33) Such an action does not mean we have to change our beliefs and our individual relationship with Christ. Paul is not directing us to change our personal and private relationship before God. We often struggle with the idea of having in any way to live our lives for others, yet love for others is a large part of our love of God. We cannot separate the two. Paul does however seem to discourage obsessing over this issue. Certainly one could drive themselves crazy attempting to please everyone around him on every matter. Just consider the welfare of those around us and get on with it...always and forever following the supreme rule...seek in all things to glorify God by doing it or not doing it. Because the bottom line is not *me*, nor is it even another person. The bottom line is the glory of God. If that is where the buck stops when we consider the exercise of a liberty, then we are on solid ground.

Rom 14:19-22 NLT *"So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up. Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, there is nothing wrong with these things in themselves. But it is wrong to eat anything if it makes another person stumble. Don't eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another Christian to stumble. You may have the faith to believe that there is nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who do not condemn themselves by doing something they know is all right."*

In closing, I want to point something out that is crucial in my opinion. All of this stuff in this chapter can be...and likely *will be, hard*. Paul is not apologizing for that nor is he attempting in some manner to make it easier for you. Being a disciple of Christ is hard. But the last time I checked, so is life in the world. The mental health struggles, the depression and suicide rates, the divorce rates, the parenting failures and bankruptcies...*all of it*, make that abundantly clear...even though you can't convince any of the folks standing in line to be next down that shoot. Being a disciple of Jesus means I have **died**. This all isn't about me anymore. Its all about Jesus and bringing glory to Him, the Father, and the kingdom at large. You **MUST** depend on the Holy Spirit to fill you, walk with you, and strengthen you. And He will. He promised. But there is just not some magically mystical elixir you can drink and avoid it all. Remember: No guts, no glory.