

5. All to the Glory of God (3Q 2026 1 and 2 Corinthians)

Biblical material: 1 Corinthians 8; Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 9:1–6; 1 Cor. 10:5–22; Deut. 6:4, 5; Mark 12:28–31; 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Quotes

- Our ultimate aim in life is not to be healthy, wealthy, prosperous, or problem free. Our ultimate aim in life is to bring glory to God. *Anne Graham Lotz*
- How do we bring glory to God? The Bible's short answer is: by growing more and more like Jesus Christ. *Sinclair B. Ferguson*
- The glory of God always comes at the sacrifice of self. *Aiden Wilson Tozer*
- The deepest longing of the human heart is to know and enjoy the glory of God. We were made for this. *John Piper*
- We do not segment our lives, giving some time to God, some to our business or schooling, while keeping parts to ourselves. The idea is to live all of our lives in the presence of God, under the authority of God, and for the honor and glory of God. That is what the Christian life is all about. *R.C. Sproul*
- Every one of us is, even from his mother's womb, a master craftsman of idols. *John Calvin*
- Idolatry is really not good for anyone. Not even the idols. *John Bach*

Questions

How does a discussion about food sacrificed to idols end in the command to do everything to the glory of God? What does the debate over idols tell us about how we should act today? Why does Paul have to remind the Corinthians about the importance of support for those in ministry? What does all this have to do with issues of church authority?

Bible summary

1 Corinthians 8 deals with the issue of food sacrificed to idols, which was a big concern at the time and often split the church. The Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15:20 instructed Christians to avoid foods sacrificed to idols. In 1 Corinthians 9:1–6 Paul takes up the question of support for ministers, pointing to his credentials as an apostle. 1 Corinthians 10:5–22 looks at idol worship, pointing out that idols do not exist. Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 references the one true God, which Jesus repeats in Mark 12:28–31. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, make sure to do everything to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Comment

We're looking at three chapters in 1 Corinthians this week, along with other Biblical material—surely too much to cover!

Food sacrificed to idols is obviously not an issue in Western churches today, but may still be a concern in some parts of the world. But it illustrates a question of deeply-held beliefs that may divide the church, such as women's ordination.

While our church experience is very different nearly 2000 years on from the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, it remains a very useful example of how the church dealt with what was a major issue. In fact for those early Christians, the primary issue they faced was how to deal with the change from Judaism. For there was no “thus saith the Lord” that indicated circumcision, feast days, dietary laws, ritual uncleanness etc. had been done away with. When it came to the decisions made in Acts 15, they did not take issue with anyone who continued to believe that such aspects were important. However for the foreigners, they gave only four requirements.

As we debate matters such as ordination without regard for gender in our church councils, we should take a leaf out of those early believers' book. First, they made sure that their conclusions were Biblical, and most importantly, that they asked for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since we

have always believed in “present truth” and that this is progressive, we should certainly make the Holy Spirit central as he leads us into all truth.

Paul picks up the issue again in his letter to the Romans (chapter 14). His main plea here is not to provoke division. This outlines a fundamental principle in how we relate to one another, and what we do ourselves. The attitude is one of respect for the other, and not insisting on having our own way. This is not compromising of principle, but allowing the principle of love to operate in our dealing with each other. The key is “So accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, to God’s glory.” (Romans 15:7). This mutual acceptance goes a long way to defuse conflict and to make sure we live together in an amicable spirit.

Paul clearly came to the position that since idols did not exist, it did not matter if you ate food sacrificed to them. In this he took a different position to Acts 15. But for some it was still a concern, and John in Revelation criticizes Balaam for seducing the children of Israel by having them eat food sacrificed to idols (Revelation 2:14).

What is perhaps most interesting about the Jerusalem Council is what they did not do. They did not take a vote. James simply says, “It seemed best to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28 FBV). Nor did they demand compliance, or threaten any sanctions for disobedience. They simply advised, “You will do well to observe these requirements” (verse 29, FBV). And as we see later, even their counsel was not seen as absolutely mandatory since Paul discusses the issue of food sacrificed to idols subsequently. The basis for the decision is “we shouldn’t make it difficult for foreigners who turn to God.” (verse 19, FBV). The solution was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and then implemented.

James White gives this excellent conclusion: “The report of that blessed meeting at Jerusalem to settle a festering difficulty, commences on this wise: ‘For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.’ And the brethren which were from among the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, ‘rejoiced for the consolation.’ Differences settled in this way frequently seem more than settled, and generally remain settled; while those disposed of by the exercise of mere church authority are seldom really settled at all.” *Life Sketches* (1880), p.407.

Ellen White Comments

The Lord urges His supremacy. But Satan well knows that the worship of the living God elevates, ennobles, and exalts a nation. He knows that idol-worship does not elevate, but that it degrades man’s ideas, by associating with worship that which is base and corrupt. He is at work constantly to draw the mind away from the only true and living God. He leads men to give honor and glory to objects that human hands have made or to soulless creatures that God has created. The Egyptians and other heathen nations had many strange gods—creatures of their own fanciful imagination. {4BC 1145.5 }

To make an image of God dishonors Him. No one should bring into service the power of imagination to worship that which belittles God in the mind and associates Him with common things. Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth. They must exercise living faith. Their worship will then be controlled not by the imagination, but by genuine faith. { 4BC 1145.7 }

Let men worship and serve the Lord God, and Him only. Let not selfish pride be lifted up and served as a god. Let not money be made a god. If sensuality is not kept under the control of the higher powers of the mind, base passion will rule the being. Anything that is made the subject of undue thought and admiration, absorbing the mind, is a God chosen before the Lord. God is a searcher of the heart. He distinguishes between true heart-service and idolatry (Manuscript 126, 1901). {4BC 1145.8 }