

Glorifying God Alone

1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



“Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

—1 Corinthians 10:31

At the heart of the Christian life lies a question of purpose: *Why are we here?* Thomas Aquinas, one of the Church’s great theological minds, answers with stunning clarity and depth. He teaches that we exist to glorify God—not because God needs our praise, but because in glorifying Him, **we are drawn into our highest joy and deepest fulfillment**. That is, an abiding relationship with God where one experiences his presence and participates in his will.

Aquinas teaches that “man’s ultimate happiness consists in the contemplation of God, which is an act of the intellect” (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q.3, a.5). This contemplation is not abstract theology or cold study, but a vibrant, relational knowing of God—a seeing of His beauty that surpasses all earthly pleasure. Aquinas says that humanity was made to rest in God, to gaze upon His majesty, and to delight in His truth. That end, the **beatific vision**, is the crown of Christian hope.

But how do we begin to glorify God now, while we walk in the world of shadows and struggle? Aquinas helps us here, too. He writes, “The more a man is united to God, the more he shares in His goodness, and the more he glorifies Him” (*ST*, II-II, Q.81, a.1). To glorify God, then, is to reflect His goodness in our ordinary lives—by loving our neighbors, acting justly, pursuing holiness, and ordering our desires toward Him. These are the very things we hear Jesus teach in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5). And it is exactly what Paul is encouraging the Corinthian believers with. This isn’t an easy invitation or calling. It is going to require prayer, humility, generosity, and courage. At its core, it is what it means to be righteous. Loving God and loving our neighbors. It is why Paul keeps stressing that **right-living (righteousness) includes God and my neighbors**.

1. Recap – Flee Sin

a. You don't have to give in. – 10:13 – Reminder from last week.

- i. This is a crucial verse in Paul's letter and rhetoric. You can almost hear the rebuttal of the Corinthians, "It is so hard to not sin.... or, is it really that big of a deal?" And if we're honest, these are very similar rebuttals that we use! Yet, Paul doesn't let them off the hook, and thankfully, we aren't let off the hook either.

- 1. *Temptation* is sometimes understood simply as 'test' (GNB, Héring), a meaning it certainly has on occasion. But here it is used in a broad sense, which includes both 'test' and 'temptation'. Nothing exceptional in either way had happened to the Corinthians. They had experienced only *what is common to man*. **And God is not simply a spectator of the affairs of life; he is concerned and active. Believers can count on his help. He will always make a way out.** This word (*ekbasis*) may denote a mountain defile. The imagery is that of an army trapped in rugged country, which manages to escape from an impossible situation through a mountain pass. The assurance of this verse is a permanent comfort and strength to believers. Our trust is in the faithfulness of God.¹

ii. There are three things that we learn from Paul in this verse on temptation.

- 1. Temptation and sin **are not** the same.
 - a. Paul doesn't equate temptation and sin here. It is clear that temptation has the possibility of giving way to sin. But that is not a forgone conclusion in Paul's mind. Instead, there is a second option: temptation can give way to obedience and righteousness.
 - b. By the way, if temptation and sin were the same thing, Jesus couldn't have claimed to live a sinless life. After his baptism, he was tempted in the desert by Satan, and he did not sin. (cf. Luke 4)
- 2. You can be tempted **without** sinning.
 - a. Paul gives them and us some really good news here: sin doesn't have to dominate you! In fact, what we are tempted with is common. It isn't so unique that no one else can relate to it. Yes, the details of your story are unique to you. But there is no sin that is so unique that only you struggle with it. We are all in the same boat, and that is good news to know that you are not alone.
 - b. The second aspect of good news is that God is with us and provides us a way out! We are not facing temptation alone or just with other humans. We have the very God of the universe on our side and rooting for us to resist sin! In fact, it is God who provides the way and means of escape! It isn't even that God is on the sidelines like a spectator; he is right there with us, helping us flee sin. How amazing!
- 3. You are **not powerless** against temptation.
 - a. **One of the most important steps in resisting sin is identifying patterns when that sin pops up in our lives.** This is looking at the when, where, how, and why of our sin patterns. Too often, we beat ourselves up and lay heavy shame on ourselves, where we say things like, "Why can't you be better or stronger," or "you just need to pray more or be more

¹ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 142.

devoted.” What we really need to do is to identify the patterns of our sin and ask for God’s help in disrupting those patterns of sin.

- b. But, Paul gives us good news, you are not powerless in the process and the commitment of defeating sin in our lives.
- c. **Another word of wisdom** – Often, we think that victory over sin is to be monumental and instant. When in reality, it is incremental and happens over our lifetime.

b. An important warning: Everything is formational.

i. There is no neutral. –

- 1. Yes, it is ok to relax, rest, and do something mindless. But, too often we approach so much of our lives that way. Think about it this way, a donut is not good nutrition. But a box of donuts is detrimental to your health. Often, we don’t consider or evaluate the influences in our lives and we end up taking in a “box of donuts” day after day and week after week. This “unconscious” approach leaves us in an immature place in our faith.

ii. We live in an age of unprecedented information and perspectives. This leaves us being reminded of a question that we asked in the early weeks of the series, “Who am I of?”

- 1. Too often we try to make sense of our world not by allowing the Bible to speak first, but by using the bible to justify our cultural perspectives.
- 2. We are at an even greater risk of this happening right now with all of the “information” that is at our fingertips and our rabid obsession with celebrities.

iii. Everything is formational.

- 1. There is nothing in this life that is not shaping or forming us in some way. I.e., Nothing is neutral and everything is trying to be the ultimate love of our lives.
- 2. This means that sports, news, social media, relationships, and activities are all formational. This isn’t to be some spiritual boogeyman syndrome. Where we cast off anything and everything that isn’t “Christian,” but is to be a sobering reminder that there is nothing neutral in this world. So we need to ask ourselves the question, what are we being formed into?

iv. Is it forming me to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit or the fruit of the flesh?

- 1. Jesus’ words on evaluating and judging false teachers doesn’t just apply to religious teachers. Yes, we should absolutely weigh and judge Bible teachers and preachers against the very word of God and faithful teachers that have come before.
- 2. We also need to examine the other areas and influences in our lives and ask how they are forming us and what are they forming us into?

c. What culture are we buying into? (Culture eats strategy for breakfast.) - Note: This is not asking your ideal self, it is asking your real self.

i. Individualism?

- 1. The lone ranger syndrome.

ii. Elitism?

- 1. “I know best.”

iii. Whims and desires?

- 1. Whatever the heart or the stomach wants.

iv. Outrage and offense?

- 1. I live my life in a consistent state of outrage and get offended easily. In fact, if there isn’t something to complain about, I likely wouldn’t have anything to talk about.

- v. Fear of missing out?
 - 1. If I don't do this thing, then I am going to miss out. If I miss out, my life won't be complete.

2. Other's Minded

- a. Rewind to chapter 6.
 - i. Discerning Corinthian citations in the letter is complicated, but most scholars think that the words *I have the right to do anything*, quoted twice in the verse, reflect a Corinthian slogan. The slogan was probably particularly used to justify doing whatever they wished sexually with their bodies, and the same saying appears with reference to food offered to idols (10:23). Possibly, the slogan comes from Stoic sources and was picked up by believers. Paul does not reject the slogan entirely but qualifies it, since it could be applied in misleading and destructive ways (so also in 10:23). Even though 'everything is permissible' (CSB), not everything is *beneficial*. Some matters which are permissible are not helpful. At the same time, there is the danger of being *mastered by* what is allowable. Some might find themselves enslaved by something that is not necessarily wrong in and of itself. Freedom, as Paul teaches elsewhere (Gal. 5:13), should be pressed into the service of love.²
 - 1. What is clear, is that Paul was quoting a phrase or idea that was known to them. And one that they readily agreed with.
 - ii. **This is an important question in our age – Is it beneficial?**
 - 1. We want to feel like we know the truth, we understand our world, and we want to feel safe.
 - 2. As Christians, what is the thing that we are fixed on and see as most beneficial? → Becoming like Christ. So that question for us really isn't, "Is it beneficial?" it is, "Does this help me become more like Christ?"
 - 3. Paul wants to clarify for them exactly what he means here with issues of liberty and sanctification, so he relates it back to food.
 - a. Perhaps the Corinthians drew an analogy between the appetite for food and the desire for sex, arguing that one should satisfy the latter whenever one wishes, just as one satisfies the former. If so, Paul refuses to countenance the analogy, claiming that *the body* is not intended for *sexual immorality (porneia)* but *for the Lord*. The body was created, not to fulfil sexual desires, but for the Lord's sake, so one should use one's body to please the Lord. Similarly, *the Lord is for the body*. The word *Lord* signals that Jesus is the master over one's body; he rules over what believers do with their bodies. And he is the Lord over the bodies of believers for their benefit, so that they might flourish.³
 - 4. He also offers another boundary for the believer – Not only are some things not beneficial, but the believer is not to be dominated by anything either.
- b. **The tension of this passage.**

² Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 126.

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 126–127.

- i. How do I honor God and love my neighbor, without indulging sin or becoming legalistic or separatistic?
 - 1. This passage doesn't give us any easy answers. It invites us into the tension of living a faithful Christian life. We are to love God by fleeing sin and loving our neighbors. That is going to require us to do some prayerful thinking and to exercise humility, not using our freedoms to steamroll other believers or to indulge non-believers. It is also going to mean that, depending on the context, we might have a different response or posture. Simply, Paul isn't giving us an easy checklist of do this and don't do that in this passage. He is driving us to prayerful and humble dependence on the Lord for guidance and direction in the difficult situations of life.
 - ii. Here is how one commentator sums up this passage. "Paul's long and thoughtful section on food comes to a head in one of his most quotable sentences: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians **10:31**). This is a super summary of Paul's teaching on everything, not just food. The glory of God is paramount. If you are taking part in something which God has given, do it with thankfulness for his grace and bounty. If you are abstaining from it, do it out of the desire that other people are not made to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or other Christians (**v 32**). If you're cooking for a Muslim, go to the halal store. If you're in a culture where alcohol is frowned upon, go teetotal. If your friend becomes a vegan, learn some new recipes. If your neighbor invites you for a barbecue, eat what is set before you and thank God for making cows out of beef. Food and drink matter, but the glory of God matters more."⁴
- c. **Let's go back to the food conversation.**
- i. Eating a meal at the temple – Off limits.
 - ii. Getting meat in the market that was sacrificed to idols – No problem.
 - iii. Eating in another person's home –
 - 1. If they don't mention where it came from, don't worry.
 - 2. If they do mention it, don't eat it.
- d. Let's look at Jesus – Matt. 9:9-13
- i. ¹³ **Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."**
 - ii. **Matt. 9:13.** *Go and learn* does not mean "go off on a journey" but is a call for a genuine effort to understand. Jesus proceeds to quote from Hosea 6:6, where the prophet looks for God's people to show love and loyalty.³⁴ In the first instance this will mean that they should love the God who loves them so much. But this means also that they should love other people as God loves them. So it is that Jesus looks for the self-satisfied Pharisees to show compassion to the outcasts instead of rejecting them so firmly. He makes that clear when he goes on to outline his own procedure. *I did not come* points to his existence before he "came" to this world and sums up the essence of his mission (cf. 5:17). When he left his heavenly abode to come to earth, this was not in order to congratulate people like the Pharisees who were so well satisfied with themselves and so ready to condemn all who failed to measure up to their finicky standards. Nor indeed was it to deal with people who were genuinely right with God (*GNB* has "respectable people," but it is

⁴ Andrew Wilson, *1 Corinthians for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God's Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2021), 114.

righteousness, not respectability, of which Matthew writes). Rather, his business was with sinners,³⁵ those who must produce repentance if they were to be saved. The attitude of the Pharisees was such that these people were left far from God; they made no attempt to bring them near. Since they were ready to let these people die in their sins, their attitude lacked compassion and thus failed to comply with the standards taught by the prophet they professed to honor so highly. This failure meant that in fact the Pharisees belonged among the people Hosea condemned—a startling accusation for these so outwardly religious people! Luke tells us that Jesus came to call the sinful people “to repentance” (Luke 5:32), but Matthew lets this be understood. He leaves his emphasis on the fact that the people Jesus came to call were *sinners*. Later we find that he came to die for them (20:28). Jesus never said that the people in question were anything other than sinful. But that was not the point. The point was that he came to save sinners.⁵

e. Who is in your life? – What do they need from you?

- i. Truth and love – A not so easy or clean reality.
 - 1. Remember – When Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners, his presence with them was seen as approval of their sin. However, we know that is not what Jesus was doing.

3. God’s Glory Alone

- a. Liberty wasn’t given to us for our pride or our indulgence. It was given to us so that we could walk in faithfulness to the mission that God has called us to with joy, purpose, and freedom.
 - i. Our freedom was given as freedom from the dominion of sin not as the freedom for sinful engagement.
- b. Mature Christians don’t merely ask, “Is this sinful?”**
 - i. Too often, we have reduced Christian maturity to the standard of “just don’t sin.” You’ve heard me say it before, Christians are not to engage in sin. They are not to glorify or be satisfied in sinful patterns. And they are not to celebrate sin.
 - ii. Yet, when we simply try to live our lives by avoiding sin, we miss that we are actually called to courageously and adventurously pursue God’s glory. Thinking through the issues of liberty and freedom, loving their neighbors, and avoiding sin are all part of an invitation to courageously and adventurously pursue God’s glory for the Corinthians.
- c. The question mature Christians ask: “Does this glorify God?” – Other ways to ask this question:**
 - i. Is this wise?**
 - 1. Wisdom is the right application of knowledge. It isn’t just knowing the right thing, but it includes doing the right thing with the right heart and motivation.
 - 2. When we studied the Proverbs this winter, we consistently asked the question of wisdom. And it was God’s Word that was our rubric and guide for determining wise action.
 - ii. Does this please God?**
 - 1. We have to remember that the will of God will never have us violate the Word of God. Same goes with the Spirit of God.

⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 221–222.

2. One of the ways we can determine if something is in the will of God and is wise, is to ask if it is pleasing to God. When you look at the life of Christ, we see Jesus living in a way that pleases God, even when it confounded and offended the religious elite.
 - a. Remember though, Jesus never sinned. - Too often our desire to “love” others leads to our sinful action and that is not pleasing to God. On the other end, the way we hold to God’s truth can be done without compassion and understanding, and that also displeases God.
 3. **The fruit of the flesh test – If anything that I am doing is rooted or results in the fruit of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), God is not pleased. Instead it is the Fruit of the Spirit that is pleasing to God.**
- iii. **Does this lead to human flourishing?**
1. The plans, purposes, and precepts of God are ultimately given to us by God for our flourishing. And what is our ultimate flourishing? → A redeemed relationship with God through Christ.
 2. We can especially ask this question when it comes to compassion efforts. Does this actually lead to human flourishing and honor God? Or does it only enable patterns of sin and rebellion?
- iv. **Does this jeopardize my ability to witness and share the gospel?**
1. This is a crucial question for us when we are trying to discern God’s will and live in a way that gives God glory. The person who has been transformed from the inside out, lives in a way that understands the nature of eternity and the call of the Great Commission as something that is central and primary in our lives.
 2. More than anything, we should ask this question not of our theology, but of our actions and our attitudes.
- d. These questions help move us from being a people that are just trying to avoid sin, to a people that are courageously following Christ. So let’s reflect and ask -
- i. **Are we more worried about avoiding sin, or are we focused on courageously obeying God as his kingdom people?**
 - ii. Jesus has made it clear that his kingdom’s people will live in a distinctively different way that will give glory to God. → This warning passage should invite us to examine the posture of our hearts in this area.