

1Corinthians 18-07-01b

We'll pick up now on our study of 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and we're taking a look at, and don't feel bad if you're kind of wrestling with this whole way of escape notion, it's kind of a fresh thought, but we have Paul's clear statement here that God is faithful in not allowing us to be tested beyond what we are able to bear. Actually, it just says beyond what you are able, beyond your dynamite, beyond your inherent power, but with the test will also make the way of escape. So our understanding really turns on this word way of escape.

And again, I want to give you this, it is ekbasis, E-K-B-A-S-I-S. It's only used two places in the New Testament, and I like that because when I'm looking at one of the places, I only have to go one other place to see how it's used. That other place is Hebrews chapter 13, verse 7. Remember those who have the rule over you, remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the ekbasis of conduct, considering the end of conduct.

Now, would this be way of escape of conduct? Would this be the exit? What's our New King James translation of ekbasis here? What does it say? I'll read it to you again. Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. There is an italics, cross it out.

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of conduct, the ekbasis of conduct. Now, it's translated outcome, right? What if you switch those two words? Come out, exit, right? How did it come out? What was the outcome? What came out? Do you see? Considering the outcome, considering what happened as a result. Yes? Ekbasis.

That's Hebrews 13.7. In our passage, God will not allow you to be tested, and I wouldn't say tempted per se. Perazzo is testing. Perazmos is testing.

Perazzo is to test, to challenge, to put to the test. Who will not allow you to be tested, to be challenged, to be, you know, how do you view a test? It depends on how much you know. If you're an A student, a test is a chance to excel and to show what you know.

If you're a bad student, a test is a temptation to worry and be upset and fail and do all kinds of heinous things. It will not allow you to be tested beyond your ability, beyond what you can handle. But with the test will also make the outcome.

What if we that you may be able to bear up under? Huperferro. Ferro is to bear or carry, P-H-E-R-O, huper, hyper, like a hypodermic needle. This is, I'm sorry, hupo, hupoferro, not hyper.

Hyper is above. That's what we saw. Beyond what you are able, above what you are able is hyper.

This is to bear up under. It's like a tupa, like hypo, hypoferro, hypodermic, under the skin, bear up under. God will make an outcome.

What is the outcome of your faith? Remember we have that phrase used in another place in 1 Peter 1 verse 9. You are receiving the end result of your faith, the deliverance of your souls, 1 Peter 1 verse 9. Slightly different Greek construction there, but the idea is the same. You are receiving the outcome of your faith, the end result of your faith. The English Standard Version translates 1 Peter 1 verse 9 with outcome.

Many of the other versions use goal, the goal of your faith. But the word in 1 Peter 1 verse 9 is telos, the end of your faith. You upon whom the end of the ages have come, telos.

What is the end? What is the goal? But Paul doesn't want to use the word end here for somebody to say, well, God has provided the end of the test. And they might misconstrue telos to mean the finish of the test. God has provided an ending to the test.

So instead of telos, here he uses ekbosis, which is more clear. There is an outcome, there is a result, there is a benefit. You go back to Romans 8.28, all things work together for an ekbosis of good.

Ekbosis is not in that passage, but that's the idea. Now, do we always know the end that God has made in a test? Do we know the reason for the test? Is there going to be a justification or a vindication or a visible purpose for that test in this life? Paul doesn't say that, does he? What he says is, God has made an outcome. And many times we trust that there is an outcome even if we don't know what it is.

And this is living by faith. By faith. And Paul is going to be talking about that in the next chapter.

So, what do we know about testing? A, we know by faith that God never tests us beyond our inherent power, our dunamis, our strength. But, with the test, we'll also make an outcome so that you are able to bear it. What is the outcome? What is the end of our faith? Well, you have need of endurance.

After you've suffered a while, you receive the promises. That's one outcome. Inheritance is a product of faith.

Remember those things? Add to your faith. There's an additive process, a diligence, and so on. And hope does not disappoint.

Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. I think this is Romans 5, where Paul, having talked about justification by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you remember Romans 5? Turn over to Romans.

It's back one book. Romans 5. What is the ekbasis here? What is the outcome? Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we

have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. Let he who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

How do we stand? We stand by grace. We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Hope of the glory of God. We stand and we celebrate by grace the hope of God's glory. Not only that, we glory in tribulations.

We glory in testing. Knowing that tribulation produces perseverance. Perseverance produces character.

Character produces hope. Hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. So, verse 11.

Not only that, we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received reconciliation. We rejoice. We rejoice in our sufferings.

We rejoice in the peace that we have with God. That we have been reconciled with God. That God is involved in our lives.

He is our Heavenly Father. We are His children. He will not allow us to be tested above what we are able to bear.

And we look for that. We trust Him. It draws us close to Him.

He would not have us tested to no purpose. He's not torturing His children. Children have to trust their parents many times that what they're doing is good for them.

A meal is delayed. A gratification is set aside. We can't do that right now.

You can't have that right now. We can't gratify your immediate desire right now. You have to wait.

You have to be patient. I have to turn you over to these strangers who are going to inflict some pain on you, but it's necessary. Because you've got a tooth that needs to be pulled.

You've got a shot that needs to be given. You've got an infection that needs to be addressed. You've got a scrape that needs to be cleaned and disinfected.

You've got something, and I have to put you into a challenge situation for a better good that will follow that you may not understand. Try to explain to a tiny child why you're having to pull a splinter, why you're having to put stinging ointment. In my childhood, it was merthiolate, the bane of all cuts and scrapes.

Stain your skin orange and burn like liquid fire. But my parents told me that's what it needed. And so it hurts enough, and now it's going to hurt more.

You've got to trust me on this. And so you build trust. You see the outcome of that trust.

So that's what Paul is talking about here in Corinthians. Not challenged above what you're able to bear. With the test, God will make an outcome.

It's not a challenge to no purpose. It is not a test with no point. It's not the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

You didn't just happen to have this circumstance. God has made an outcome for every one of them, and He has calibrated the test so that it is not more than you can handle. It's a calibrated test, and it has a purpose.

So, as you face your tests, what are your two objects of faith? They are in this verse. I can handle this. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me, says in the old King James.

Now, there's context here. I can do all things? Can I lift this house over my head? No. Can I fly? No.

Not unaided. What does it mean, all things? These kinds of things. I can bear up under any challenge God allows into my life because of two things.

He has calibrated it so that it is not excessive, and He has made an outcome. It has a purpose. I typically don't know what the purpose is.

I had a challenge, didn't know what the purpose of it was. Sometimes later in my life, I can look back and say, oh, I can see how God was working that together. I gave you the example of my stovepipe.

I gave you the past example of trying to pursue an engineering degree and being daunted at every turn. I strove, and I studied, and I got help. My roommate was patiently trying to explain to me, here's how this works.

It was like impossible. It wasn't like impossible. It was impossible.

I couldn't get a grasp. It was one of the first times in my life that I tackled a thing, and I was just failing. And I would go to God night after night and say, Lord, what is the matter with me? Why can I not learn this material? Why can I not master it? Why can I not succeed? Don't you promise that if we're faithful, and I'm staying up in the shower and listening to Bible studies on tape, and after taps, and robbing myself of an hour of sleep every single day, and I'm having to get up and march off my demerits early in the morning.

That was the beginning, by the way, of my four hours of sleep a night career, because I was staying up late for Bible study, and then I was getting up early to march off all my demerits. But why am I failing? Why am I failing? Well, God made an outcome of that, because I was eventually forced to a different academic path. And that has been invaluable, essential to pretty

much everything I've done since.

Could God have had an alternate path where being a wonderful engineer would have been blessed? Yes. I know people that got their engineering degree at that same school, and they have been richly blessed. But God had a particular path for me that I couldn't see at the time.

I thought it was a failure, and the outcome was sort of a diminishment. I had to become what they called a bull major instead of a hard engineering major. Electrical or mechanical or systems engineering is what I was pursuing.

Instead, I ended up as an English major, and it was kind of a soft humanities major. And I'm at an engineering school. I'm one of the few people on the planet, others like me, that go to an engineering school and end up with a humanities major.

But I'm not a B.A., I'm a B.S. I have a Bachelor of Science, and I majored in English. How did that happen? Well, you take enough science there, your B.S. is basically in general engineering, and you have a minor in English, but they call it an English major. But here's the point.

God makes an outcome, and that potential, you can look at it two ways. Because ekbasis also means exit door. So is there an exit door that you don't take? Well, the outcome of that is that this is a thing you lay on the altar before God, and what seems like a diminishment is actually an opportunity to bring something voluntarily to God.

You could voluntarily leave. Paul didn't have to work at no cost. He did have to be an apostle.

The Lord Jesus smacked him on the road to Damascus and said, You're my apostle to the Gentiles. He said, Woe to me if I don't do that job. But the optional part, I lay that before God as a sacrifice.

And knowing that he could claim those things, but he doesn't, is itself a piece of strength in bearing up under it. Sure, I could not do this, but I know why I'm doing it. There is an outcome of it that benefits my fellow believers.

And that outcome of expressing love at the cost to myself, a self-sacrifice, that in itself is this outcome. So you see how these two ideas are enmeshed. They're entangled.

They are two parts of the same thing. The outcome, many times, it is the thing you could escape. Sometimes you say, Well, I've got a condition and there's nothing I can do about it.

It's irreversible. It's irretrievable. I've got infected with a virus and I'm permanently infected with it.

I can't change that. I've got some physical malady that won't go away. So I don't see any way of escape in that sense.

Well, what is the way of escape? In our weakness, God's strength is made manifest. And I will

glory in my weakness. I will offer my weakness on the altar to God as an opportunity for Him to express His glory.

Our Psalm 8 study, suckling infants and babies are the means by which God has ordained strongholds and spreading His glory above the heavens. It comes from these weaklings, these inadequate and insufficient ones, these dependent ones. But in dependence, God ordains strength greater than anything in the heavens.

So it's both and. Ekbooses. It's a beautiful choice of term here.

But it is certainly informed by Hebrews 13.7 where you have this idea that a life well lived, these leaders who have spoken the word of God to you and have demonstrated their faith as an example that you should follow. When you look at them, you consider their faith, you consider their example, consider the ekbooses, the outcome. Could these people have done something else with their lives? Could they have gone elsewhere and succeeded? Could they have used their gifts and their talents in the service of amassing a fortune or a cushy retirement? Remember those who have the rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, specifically communicators in that first century time that were divinely commissioned as apostles, spoken the word of God to you, follow their faith and consider the ekbooses of their conduct, the outcome and the ultimate deliverance that it is.

Yes, they may be persecuted, they may be run out of town, they may be killed for their faith, but consider the outcome. What is the ekbooses that God has constructed? Okay, so back to chapter 10 that you may be able to bear up under. Therefore, verse 14, my beloved, now you have a direct imperative.

What should you then do in the light of everything we've seen in chapter 9 and chapter 10? He's back to the issues that are facing them. So now you know, now you've had the word of God spoken, now you've had the examples from nature, now you've had the examples from observation, now you've had the examples from the word of God itself, the types, and you interpret those in the light of God's purpose, God's commands, now here's the imperative. Now we know what to do.

Should I go up to the temple and participate in, you know, Demeter's daughter's first birthday party up there? Paul says, therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. Just a few lines up, he says, do not become idolaters as were some of them. They are our examples.

So do not become idolaters in verse 7. Flee idolatry, verse 14. Do not become one, and in fact, don't stick around where it's happening. Flee it.

Do not become idolaters. Flee idolatry. If you flee a thing, are you next to it? Are you associated with it? Are you near it? Are you in the same room with it? Same county with it? If you flee a thing, there is separation.

There is distance. There is discrimination. I am not a part of it.

I am not condoning it. I'm not standing next to it. I'm not walking in its council.

I'm not sitting in its seat. I'm not standing in its path. Flee it.

Then Paul says in verse 15, I speak as to wise men. Now, he has just got through saying, I would not have you ignorant. Do not be ignorant.

Do you not know? Remember how many times we've had this, have you forgotten what you learned? Have you forgotten what I taught you? Now he says, I'm speaking as to phronomos, P-H-R-O-N-I-M-O-I-S, phronimos. And the O-I-S tells you that this is plural. I'm speaking as to wise ones.

Phroneo is a word that has the idea of wisdom in the sense of good thinking, solid thinking. Phroneo, phronomos, it basically means intelligent. You've got wits and you use them.

You've got knowledge and reason and you apply those to be mindful of a thing. Paul basically says, I'm speaking as to people who are smart enough to care about this. Have you ever been around believers who just don't really have much of an interest in Bible study that just it's not their thing? They like being Christians.

They believe in Jesus. They'll go to church. But if you want to address any of the advances of understanding and getting past, yeah, Jesus loves me, this I know.

Go to heaven when I die. I like hanging around other Christians. We have squeaky clean fun most of the time.

And it's just a good kind of a social club to be a part of. And God loves me. And if I get in trouble, I'll say, oh, God help.

And that's about it. Paul says, look, if you're that kind of Christian, I'm not talking to you. I'm talking about those who care enough to think, who care enough to want to know, who are going to listen when I'm talking, who are going to come to Bible class and try to get something out of it because you've got a hunger and a thirst for righteousness.

I speak as to phronomos, those who are wise. Prudent is a good translation. I'm speaking to the prudent.

Prudent people are typically active in their preparation and in their caution and in their thinking about things in advance. Prudent people make a plan. Prudent people have a strategy, right? I'm speaking to the prudent.

If you're imprudent, you're just going to blow this off and go do what you want to do. Flee from idolatry. I speak.

I am speaking. This is just simple Lego, present active indicative. I am talking to the prudent ones.

Judge for yourselves what I say. Creno. This is the verb that the noun comes from for a judge, somebody who sits on the bench.

You render a verdict for yourselves what I say. And this is a different word for talking. This is phemi, P-H-E-M-I, what I say.

And what I am saying. This is another present active indicative. Judge for yourself what I am affirming.

I am talking to the prudent. You judge for yourselves what I am saying. Now, this is what you and I should be doing as we listen now, as we get up and go about the rest of our day and the rest of our week and the rest of our lives.

What has Paul said here? Why are we studying this? What's the point? Two things. First of all, if we think we stand, if we think our current practices like these people had are justifiable and we can stand before the judgment of God and this is going to be gold and silver and precious stones, even then we need to take another look. The Corinthians thought they were justified.

Where was the flaw? How can you Creno? How can you judge yourself and come up two thumbs pointed to the sky and yet you get to God's judgment and it's two thumbs pointed toward the fire? How does that happen? Confirmation bias. You see what you want to see. You hear what you want to hear.

You filter types. You filter arguments. You filter facts to suit what you want to conclude anyway and we have to fight this.

How do we fight it? You can't fight it in the flesh. Your flesh is going to argue for the flesh and the hardest deceitful above all things. Jeremiah 17.9. Nobody can balance the imbalance of the human perspective.

No human being can objectify his own thinking. You can't do it. So where does objectivity come from? The carnal mind doesn't understand the things of the Spirit because they are spiritually discerned.

We have to cultivate. We have to encourage and create an environment welcoming to the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit. How do you do that? Don't we already have the Spirit? Weren't we baptized by the Spirit at the point of our salvation? Are we not indwelt? Are we not sealed? Are we not gifted? What is the one thing that is optional? Did you have an option of what gift you got when you were saved? No.

Do you have an option for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? He indwells every member of the body of Christ. Do you have an option of being sealed into the body of Christ? No. You're sealed and you can't get out if you want to.

You belong to Christ. He bought you with His blood. You are stamped with His name and you're

never getting out of that.

That's the basis of eternal security. Were you regenerated and given new life and new opportunities, new potentials when you were saved? Yes. What is the one thing that is optional? What is the one command related to the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures? Ephesians 5, 28.

Remember what it says? It starts with, Be not. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be . . . what? Be filled with the Spirit. Right? Be not drunk with wine . . . That's actually 5, 22.

I think I said 28. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. Actually, all those Ephesians 5 things are body commands related to the Spirit.

5, 18. Before those. Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with.

It's a command, which means it's an option. It's not automatic. Be filled.

So, back to my question. If you're going to do these things, if you're going to take heed, if you're going to flee idolatry, if you're going to flee, idolatry is the Corinthian problem. What's our problem? Evil desires.

That's the category. These are the specifics in Corinth, but all of these are evil desires, self-seeking desires. They were mirrored in the crowd that left Egypt.

I speak as to prudent ones. Judge for yourselves what I am saying. Now, we're going to get into some interesting territory here, and this is, 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? And this brings us to the very interesting topic of the ordinance, the practice, the ritual called communion, based on this passage.

It is communion. The bread and the cup are communion. And the word communion here is koinonia.

Many churches, especially Baptist churches, have a koinonia committee. A lot of Bible churches have a koinonia committee. What does koinonia mean at its root? Fellowship.

Koinonia, fellowship. The cup of blessing which we bless. Blessing itself is an interesting word.

It is sort of a repurposed word. The New Testament Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says, A few words in the New Testament, is it so plain as of eulogio and eulogia, which is our word here. Cup of blessing, the cup of eulogia.

You know what logos is, right? In the beginning was the logos. The logos was with God and the logos was God. The word, logos.

The word. Logia is to, eulogio is to speak words. So eulogia is the good word, right? Literally.

But a few words in the New Testament, our dictionary says, is it so plain as it is with eulogio and

eulogia, that they do not take their meaning from secular Greek, but from the fact that they are renderings of Hebrew words which acquired religious significance in the Old Testament and other Jewish writings. In other words, the meaning that we assign to this word is based on the Septuagint, translating Hebrew words into Greek, and the meaning comes from the Hebrew word behind it. Literally, eulogion, which is the infinitive form of logo, means to speak well, to speak finely, to speak well of someone.

Fine or noble speech would be eulogia. That's what it means in secular Greek. Fine or noble speech.

We get the word eulogize, a eulogy. Eulogio, right? It's important to know what this cup of blessing is, folks. What is the cup of blessing which we bless? The cup of eulogia, which we eulogize.

We get the word pot from poterion here, which is the cup. Poterion, pottery. You make vessels, you make cups.

So this is a vessel, this is a cup of eulogy which we eulogize. Cup of blessing which we bless. Is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The cup of blessing, is it not the fellowship? Let me ask you something.

Is fellowship tangible or intangible? It is intangible, right? It is in the realm of ideas. It may have tangible expressions, but fellowship, when you talk about being in fellowship or out of fellowship with God, or a fellowship of believers, that's an idea. That's a concept of association, of close proximity and potential intimacy and sharing, koinonia.

And in that fellowship, there is appreciation. Why do you give a eulogy at a funeral? It is an expression of appreciation for the life that has come to an end, that you are celebrating, memorializing, remembering, appreciating. It is saying what is good about that person.

So just look at this now. The vessel, and instead of blessing, we've got other words really for blessing here, but when you bless God, bless the Lord, oh my soul, what are you saying? You are eulogizing God. You are appreciating what is good about God.

You're not transferring some benefit to Him. We tend to think of a blessing as a benefit that has been bestowed, right? Eulogia, eulogy, we eulogize God. Not that He's died, but we express appreciation for the good.

Good words are spoken, right? So when it says, bless the Lord, oh my soul, I'm not going to somehow enhance God's life. I'm going to speak of Him in a way that reflects praise and honor and His glory. So, the cup of appreciation, which we appreciate, the cup of eulogy, which we eulogize, you see where this is going here? Try to distance yourself for the moment from the weight of Christian tradition of the last millennium and a half or more of literal cups, literal contents, literal bread.

What is He introducing here? This is a cup of appreciation, which we appreciate. Is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? Now, what is the fellowship of the blood of Christ? Wouldn't this make more sense if you were going to talk about a literal ritual to leave out the word fellowship? The cup of appreciation, which we appreciate, is it not the blood of Christ? This cup is my blood, did Jesus say that? What did Jesus say? It's really important to know exactly what Jesus said and exactly what Jesus did not say in the upper room, and we're coming to that. But for now, the cup of appreciation, which we appreciate, is a good translation here.

Is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? Now, how are we, here listening to the sound of my voice, how are we in fellowship? What is our basis for association? We are all redeemed with the blood of Christ. We are all bought with the precious blood of Christ, like Peter talks about, right? Isn't that what unites us? We are members of His body, we've been baptized into His body by the Holy Spirit, and it is the fellowship created by the new covenant in the Lord Jesus' blood. It is an immaterial thing.

So why does He say a cup? Why didn't He just say the appreciation we appreciate? The cup of appreciation is a shared cup, the cup that we share. The cup, He says, is fellowship. The cup we share expresses, represents, symbolizes fellowship.

Now, is it fellowship with the blood, or is it fellowship with each other? It is the fellowship created by the blood of Christ. I am not fellowshiping with the blood, I'm fellowshiping with you. The middle wall of division has been broken down, He's going to say in 2 Corinthians.

The bread which we break, the bread which we break, and the word there for break is klao, C-L-A-O, and I suspect, although I can't prove it, that the word claw, it comes from Old German and Old English, but then they don't trace it any further back. But what does a claw do? A claw breaks the skin, a claw breaks the dirt. Chickens have claws, and they scratch and claw, they break whatever it is the claw is applied to.

Klao, I used these things when I was memorizing my Greek vocabulary, and klao was an easy one to remember, it means to break. The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ? Where is the body of Christ? Who is the body of Christ? It is us. It is we.

It's the fellowship of believers. It is the united testimony and witness of faithful believers in this earth. You are the body of Christ.

Notice, is this going to talk about a particular ritual here? What does he say in verse 17? We many are one bread and one body. What's the bread? You can say it out loud. What does Paul say is the bread in verse 17? We many are what? One bread.

If it's one bread, that's the fellowship, right? The koinonia unites us. The bread is we. Got to read your Bible.

What is the bread? You going to bring a piece of bread and distribute it? What's the bread? What does Paul introduce the first time he's going to talk about the bread and the cup? What

does he define his terms as? The cup is the fellowship created by the blood of Christ. The bread is we many. One bread, one body.

The one body is believers on this earth, living at the time, in your fellowship. That's the bread. Don't forget it.

Paul's going to assume that you are prudent. He's going to assume that you are pharaonimos and that you're going to remember this. So circle it.

Put a star by it. Highlight it. Emphasize it.

Put it on a card and stick it in the cover of your Bible. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 17. We many are what? See, though many.

Though is not there. We many are one bread, one body. For we all partake of that one bread, which is Christ, right? Eating a cracker does not put you in fellowship with other believers.

Drinking grape juice does not put you in koinonia with other believers. The koinonia, the fellowship, is the blood of Christ, which is conceptual. We don't still have an inexhaustible cruise like the widow's cruise of oil that's got the blood of Christ, and if you get saved, you've got to go partake of that blood.

We don't just say, well, drink this grape juice and eat this cracker, and now you're one of us. The fellowship is the fellowship of the work of Christ represented by His blood. The symbol is the blood.

The reality is the fellowship. It's not two symbols. It's not grape juice symbolizing blood which symbolizes fellowship.

The shared cup which we appreciate, our contact when we sit down with each other for a meal, our fellowship. Fellowship is expressed in the fellowship meal, as it was in the Old Testament. The fellowship offerings were shared as a meal.

We many are one bread and one body. We partake of that one Bread, capital B, if you will. We partake of Christ.

We now represent Christ. His body was here, now it's gone. We are His body, and we partake of that.

Well, this is going to inform what we do when we go to the tupas, when we go to the example of the bread and the cup in the upper room. Paul has used a tupas of the oxen grinding out the grain. Paul has used a tupas of Israel in the wilderness, passing through the sea with the cloud and Moses.

Now he's going to use a tupas over the next chapter and a half, talking about the upper room meal, the night that Jesus was betrayed. Context, context, context. I saw a rule one time that if

you're going to look at any given verse, you should at least look at the preceding 15 verses and the following 15 verses.

I don't know why 15, it's not particularly magical or biblical, but it does recognize the importance of establishing context. And I'll be giving you some examples of that when we meet next time. But here's the point of application for this morning.

What is Paul's argument? What is the thrust of his message here in chapter 9 and chapter 10? There are factions and divisions among you. He's going to return to that. He already talked about it earlier in the letter.

In 10, he's going to say more about that. In 11, he's going to say, after talking about women and so on, verse 17 of 11, I give these instructions, but I do not praise you, because you come together, your koinonia fellowship is not for the better, but for worse. First of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.

There are divisions. You are fractured. You are factionalized.

You are broken. Where is the unity of the faith? Where is the bond of peace? Where is the love that draws the body of Christ together and every joint supplies what is needed? There is unity and the standard of a mature man. He talks about this in Ephesians chapter 4. Until we come to the maturity that God is looking for, not just individually, but as a group.

What is dividing this? First of all, it is self-interest. It is refusal to look at one's life objectively. It is confirmation bias.

It's okay, I'm going to pick and choose those pieces of teaching that reinforce what I want to do anyway, and it is insensitive to other believers, and it is insensitive to the plan and purpose of God. It is insensitive to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. So, if we think we stand and we want to take heed lest we fall, what are we going to do? The only way to correct our perceptions and ensure that our judgments are accurate is to cultivate the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives who can impress on us the righteous objective standards of the Word of God.

That has to be first. We're never going to think right. We're never going to judge right.

We're never going to be prudent ones. We're never going to be framois if we don't go back to the basics. It is the filling of the Holy Spirit.

It is the presence of God's Word in our thinking that gives us an objective basis for saying, I am in the right. I am living a life of love. I am in the fellowship.

I am loving God first and foremost, and I am loving my brother, loving one another. That has to be first. Everything else will follow.

We will know what to do in marriage. We will know what to do about idolatry. We will know what to do about what happens when you come together for a meal if those things are

established first.

And Paul is pricking the conscience and is poking the thinking of these Corinthians to get them back to the basics. What makes sense from a divine point of view? What makes sense in terms of God's plan and purpose? You're not going to be challenged and overwhelmed. God will never let your challenges overwhelm you.

You can't say, well, I have to do this because otherwise my life will be destroyed. The test of whether or not to go up to the temple and meet offer to idols or associate with people who are in a house of revelry isn't too great to bear. God is giving you this, and there is an outcome.

You're standing apart. You're making a difference and a distinction. It's not going to overwhelm you and destroy you.

God has made an outcome, and you can bear up under it. Trust Him. Submit yourself to His wisdom, and you will be wise.

Humble yourself, and you will be exalted. Examine yourself, and you will be vindicated. But we have to start with God's power for doing those things, and it is the Spirit and the Word.

Well, we'll pick up at this point next time, and we are going to move to and through chapter 10 to chapter 11, and we're going to do the Lord's Table all in one go. So you'll have to bring about a sheet and a half of blank paper for next Sunday. But we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the strength and the wisdom that comes from You through the Lord Jesus Christ, through Your Holy Spirit, through the truths expressed in Your Word. We thank You for the opportunity to reflect on it, to be enabled and empowered by it, to be informed in such a way that we can use the free will that You've given us and the thinking powers that You've given us to navigate for ourselves and lay hold of all of the potentials and opportunities that are ours in Christ. We pray that as we think about the particulars of our own lives, our own circumstances, our own challenges, and our own opportunities that Your Holy Spirit will bring alive these very truths in a way that makes our path clear, that gives us the opportunity to be patient, to endure, to recognize that You are at work in our lives in a way that has a wonderful outcome, that is a part of our own blessing as well as accomplishing Your purpose and ultimately glorifying the Lord Jesus who died to give us these opportunities.

We pray all of it in His name. Amen.