

1 Corinthians 10 pt. 3 v.23-33

RECAP: Last week we studied through Paul's instruction to the Corinthians regarding temptation, and fleeing idolatry, and finally addressing the reality of partaking in pagan/Greek religious customs when they would go to the temples in Corinth and eat the meat that had been sacrificed to these greek idols.

We added a fair amount of detail to the idea of communion - koinonia - and how partaking at Christ's table, koinonia with Christ, means something and it means that we are part of the Body, His Body.

It appears that Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to avoid entering into koinonia with these greek idols because just as we believe partaking of Christ's table means something - the greeks would view a christian as partaking of their deities table - entering into fellowship with that idol.

so Paul says, "you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." v.21

After going through that we may have walked away with the thought that Paul is putting unnecessary restrictions on believers, or if we were willing to stretch it far enough - that he is being contradictory in his views since Paul is well known for his position on grace - after all he had partaken of Christ's vast grace in his own life.

In actuality, Paul is not retreating from grace, but giving practical, real-life, useful counsel on how we can lovingly put grace into practice in our own lives. Giving allowance for other peoples conscience. Being gracious towards others. This is the practical side of doctrine. The real-life application - where the rubber meets the road.

As if knowing the readers mind - knowing that they would read through this admonition to flee idolatry, run away from participating in these pagan meals, and say wait, I thought that's acceptable - he pens the words in v. 23

v.23 - He has used this phrase before in chapter 6 entering into instruction on sexual immorality - flee sexual immorality; just as he taught in 10:14 - flee idolatry.

Here's the questions when Paul says, "all things are lawful for me," does he literally mean all things - like he can do whatever he wants? he can commit murder, sexual immorality, worship other gods, what about the softer stuff - lying, extortion, mild black mail, adultery, arson, embezzlement, selling drugs?

Of course not!

Jump back to the 1 Cor 6:12

[1Co 6:8-12 NKJV] ...you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and [you do] these things [to your] brethren! 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will

not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

You were washed, sanctified, justified - you were made new so be new!

Context matters doesn't it? These verses - all things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful - are bound by context - and in this context it is about participating in this apparently common practice of eating things sacrificed to other gods - which could have a dark spiritual connotation.

For example if a Christian were to sit and partake of a meal dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of fertility/love/sex - then that would be taken as an endorsement by that believer.

In that context Paul's words mean so much more than - you can do it, but you shouldn't.

Here's why - had one of us been caught up in that situation, ignorantly, with no ill intentions - but knowing that they are bogus idols and then our pastor wrote a tremendous letter about how terrible such things are we might feel a tremendous wave of guilt wash over us, we might even

question our salvation - oh, did I just forfeit my salvation? Oh no, better hide that, better tell some fibs, that wasn't me, etc...That's what happens in a legalistic system, people try to keep up appearances even though they aren't convicted that what they are doing is sin.

For that person Paul says, look, "all things are lawful for me but not all things are helpful, not all things build us up."

You aren't going to lose your salvation - but there are things that we participate in that add nothing to our spiritual condition, that add nothing to our faith, that add nothing to the Body.

Consider that - all things are lawful for me but not all things edify...

Notice how we first consider that to mean - all things don't build ME up, everything isn't good for ME, so I should be on guard with what I consume, see, hear, watch, participate in, etc.

BUT, Paul never says ...not all things are helpful for ME, or not all things edify ME. This is important because the next verse drives home the point about legality v. love

v.24 - It's not about ME. It can be legal, we won't lose our salvation, there is LIBERTY in matters of conscience, BUT it's not about building ME up, it's not about being helpful to ME - it's about others.

By way of poignant illustration: the cross wasn't helpful to nor did it edify Christ - it was for our sakes! Christ put us before himself, and we are bidden to do likewise if we are in fact sheep of his fold.

Moving on to some tactics, techniques, and procedures - practical application

v.25-26 - don't make a big deal out of nothing. Nowadays we have so many hangups about our food don't we. Instead of asking if it was organic, free-range, non-gmo, or high fructose free - the questions was - is this idol free? Are you sure?

*It's all God's every last thing under the sky. God is able to keep it. It is not beyond God's hand to make those things clean - he did much greater in our lives (being the clumps of meat that we are).

v.27 - eating with others - eating with unbelievers - I hope you have friends that are unbelievers and you invite them to dinner or vice versa. AND if you're going to do that then be gracious! Eating whatever is set before you for Jesus' sake that that person would see Christ's love instead of some fussy high maintenance know it all.

v.28 - BUT, there's a caveat - if they offer up the information - I can only assume as a proud patron of the local temple - then abstain, don't play the game. It's the same premise as eating in the temple, "hey this meat was offered in a worship service to the devil, you want some?" We have to

assume that this would be an unbeliever again, it would just be weird if a believer tried to play those games. Admiral Akbar...it's a trap!

Swing through Chic-fil-a and get some of the Lord's chicken on the way home.

v.29 - for the sake of the other - not ourselves, this is the nature of Christ.

why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience - it is though! That's the world we live in. Doesn't mean you're not saved, or their not saved, or that you can't have fellowship in the Body - agreeing on the fundamentals of faith. It means there are differences of opinion in matters of liberty and the stronger believer ought to bear with the convictions of the weaker believer out of love and grace. Yes, there are stronger and weaker christians.

v.30 - why am I evil spoken of - that will happen too. You won't be able to please everybody. What one person thinks of as a nice evening ministering to unbelievers by going to their house and loving them and being personable and kind and gracious - another believer will paint as irresponsible, dangerous, apostasy. It's a shame, and that's the point Paul is getting at - edifying the other, building up others.

If we all deferred to one another there wouldn't be any room for conflict in the very minor points of what we can and can't eat and drink.

v.31 - nicely put - ref. the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness - our lives should be so consumed with consuming Christ and not getting bent out of shape about meal times.

whatever you do - more than just eating and drinking

[Rom 14:17-20 NKJV] 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things [is] acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 Therefore let us pursue the things [which make] for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food...

v.32-33 - it's about the other

give no offense - sometimes our natural inclination is, if it offends them then so what, it's the truth. Paul says that's not the Spirit we have received.

[Act 24:16 NKJV] 16 "This [being] so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

[Rom 12:18 NKJV] 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

[Heb 12:14 NKJV] 14 Pursue peace with all [people], and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

Luk 17:1 NKJV] 1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe [to him] through whom they do come!

We get it twisted sometimes. We forget that the cross of Christ will be an offense on its own without us fabricating an alternate offense to provoke people. That is the truth. But the Bible teaches us that we aren't to provoke, we aren't to give offense if we are able. We aren't to live our lives in an offensive manner and blame our poor manners and inability to cooperate with others on Christ.

Why are we to avoid offending others? That they may be saved. Seeking the eternal benefit of others not just the momentary. Denying our own personal gratification, putting somebody else liberty above our own to see them meet Christ - that is well worth it. Glorious to behold.

11:1 - finally imitate me, as I imitate Christ - Paul worked, he put in effort, grace wasn't lost on him and because of that he was able to actively dispense grace to others putting their conscience and quirks above his own - because he was imitating Christ. May we all imitate Christ.