

CONSCIENTIOUS CONDUCT IN THE CHURCH

Today we will continue with the discussion of legalism / liberty / licence that we dealt with in Chapters 8 & 9.

The principles involved in the case of eating meat that was offered to idols can be applied to most, if not all situations that you are likely to be found.

What are some of the things you might do which may offend another believer?

Some examples: Wearing makeup / jewelry; drinking beverage alcohol; women wearing pants; working / recreation on Sunday, et al.

Paul used the example of eating meat offered to idols because it was an issue in his day, especially in the Corinthian culture. While we most likely will not be confronted with the exact circumstance, the principle is the same. Would Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, write so many words, about three chapters, on a subject that isn't important for us? We will read the Scriptures and then try to answer some questions.

1. ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS 10:1-13

1 Cor 10:1-13

I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. ESV

Does participation in the activities of the Church insure a person's inclusion in the family of God? Paul gives us the example of the Israelites in the wilderness to answer that question. He also gives the solution.

One of the biggest errors, in my opinion, in biblical interpretation, is the assumption that in God's setting apart of a people He called Israel, had anything to do with individual justification. The majority of Israel after the flesh was not saved, i.e. they were not justified.

Rom 9:6-8

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. ESV

1 Cor 10:1-5

Here Paul takes up the history of the Israelites; who all participated in the corporate body of Israel, but only a few of them were justified by faith alone.

All of the Israelites that made the exodus from Egypt were "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

A brief reminder that all of the baptisms, e.g. water, Holy Spirit, suffering, and in this verse, Moses, have in common the concept of being **overwhelmed**. In Scriptural water baptism a person must be overwhelmed by the water. So the Israelites went across the Red Sea with the divided waters standing high above them, they were overwhelmed into Moses.

So then all of the Israelites passed through the sea on dry land, they all ate the "spiritual food" [manna], and they all drank the water from the Rock that was Christ. The pre-incarnate Christ was present and sustained them although they did not discern His presence.

When an unbeliever partakes of the Lord's Supper he does not discern the spiritual nature of the bread and the wine. The bread and wine represent the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, yet they remain bread and wine.

In the wilderness unbelievers shared with the believers but without any spiritual blessing. Most of them died in the wilderness. "Most" is a vast understatement because all those 20 years of age and up, except for Joshua and Caleb, died there.

The point is that you can be baptized, join the church, be regular in attendance, and observe the Lord's Supper, and still be in unbelief and die in your "lostness."

1 Cor 10: 6-12

What was the real problem with the Israelites? When the time came for them to enter the Promised Land they failed to trust God. They believed the fearful report of the ten spies instead of Joshua and Caleb. [Numbers 13-14]

It wasn't the act of disobedience itself, but the lack of faith that they had shown since they left Egypt forty years earlier. "They desired evil things..." 6b
And Paul says these things are for our example.

Paul cites four occasions on which the Israelites demonstrated their unbelief:

- 1) Their worship of the golden calf. [V 7; Ex 32:6]
- 2) Their sexual immorality, when the Moabite women seduced them both physically and spiritually. [V 8; Num 25; Cf. 2 Peter 2:15]
- 3) Their complaints about the Lord having brought them out of Egypt. [V 9; Num 21:4-9]
- 4) Their murmuring over their hardships from the time they left Egypt.

Each of these situations was followed by divine judgment.

The lesson for us is that we should not presume on the grace of God

1 Cor 10:13

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

This is one of the most encouraging promises in the Bible for the Christian.

- 1) Every temptation that comes to us is common to man; we are not unique.
- 2) There is no temptation so strong that we cannot resist it.
- 3) There is always a way of escape.

It is not that God fails to keep His promise, but sometimes we fail because we put ourselves in situations where we can be tempted to sin and do not take the way of escape.

2. THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP

10:14-22

1 Cor 10:14-22

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸ Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹ What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰ No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²² Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? ESV

1 Cor 10: 14-18

One way to escape temptation is to flee from it.
Remember Joseph and Potiphar's wife. [Genesis 39]

Three illustrations:

1) What does the Lord's Supper mean? (14-17);

The Lord's Supper is not just some meaningless ritual; it portrays the union of the believer with Christ. Also, it pictures the oneness of the church as the body of Christ.

2) What did the Hebrew priests do? (18);

Some of the offerings were to be eaten by the people and the priests. This portrayed their union with one another and with the Lord.

3) The feasts in the pagan temple were off-limits to the Christian.

A Christian could eat the meat offered to an idol with a clear conscience as long as it did not offend the weaker brother. However, to participate in the pagan temple feasts was another matter because this symbolized the union of the participants with the god of the temple.

1 Cor 10:19-22

Neither the sacrifice nor the idol is anything in and of itself, but the intent behind the idol is demonic. So to participate in pagan temple feasts was to unite with demons. To partake of the Lord's Supper **and** the table of demons is unthinkable.

3. PAUL'S PERSONAL SELF-RESTRAINT 10:23-33

1 Cor 10:23-11:1

²³ "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. ²⁵ Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁶ For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." ²⁷ If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁸ But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— ²⁹ I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? ³⁰ If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³ just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

11 ¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

ESV

1 Cor 10: 23-29a

Paul returns to the expression, "everything is lawful..." [6:12] which the Corinthians were using as a pretext for permissiveness that Paul is correcting.

While everything may be lawful, not everything is helpful.

Paul summarizes this important issue of eating food offered to idols with three principles:

1. Eat anything; it is clean by virtue of being part of God's creation.
2. When someone offers you something, don't raise the question yourself.
3. If someone else raises the question, then it becomes a matter of conscience for the other person.

1 Cor 10: 29b – 33

Paul says his conscience is not ruled by another person's scruples; yet he will consider the other person's conscience so that his liberty does not harm them.

Then Paul asks three questions that should guide the life of every believer in Jesus Christ. When we exercise our Christian liberty:

1. Can I do this to the glory of God?
2. Will it cause someone to stumble?
3. Am I seeking the salvation of many?