

The Culture of Self

1 Corinthians 10; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 11-13-2022

The Good News

- Jesus is Lord of all and an able and willing Savior for all who will turn and trust.
- God is good and He created us to be holy and happy in His love.
- We pursue our happiness and the happiness of others when we love by trusting God's promises and obeying God's commands.

Our Cultural Moment: The Culture of Self

Happiness is doing whatever I want to do and being whatever I want to be. Don't tell me I can't (do what I want to do) or I'm not (whatever I want to be)! Self-denial is self-denied!

Paul is answering a question from the Corinthians along these lines: *What about eating meat sacrificed to idols, anywhere and anytime?* (Chapters 8-10) – Galatians 5:13-14

1. Beware of being the Sunday Only Christian. (1-13)

Paul is answering the Corinthians' question about eating meat sacrificed to idols (8:1). And he is dealing with the issue of laying aside our rights to love others and the issue of whether eating meat sacrificed to idols is a matter with no spiritual implications or dangers. He is arguing that there are spiritual implications and dangers. So he begins by warning them of the danger of simply following their desires instead of pursuing love. And he uses the history of the Israelites in the wilderness to make his case. He highlights the fact that all the Israelites had the same experiences, worship, and privileges but God was displeased with most of them. And he says it was because of their evil desires or cravings. Then he gives four examples of how these desires or cravings were unchecked and led them into serious sin. (1) The golden calf (Exodus 32:1-6) (2) Sin with the daughters of Moab at Baal-Peor (Numbers 25:1-9) (3) Complaining about the Manna (Numbers 21:4-9) (4) Rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16). Paul warns professing Christians to beware of falling into serious sin and falling away from Christ by simply doing what they want to do, regardless of how it affects others and how it may involve them in sin of some kind. He reminds them that God is able to deliver them whatever the temptation or trial might be.

Being a part of the visible people of God does not guarantee my salvation, but only faith working through love. (Isaiah 1:10-20) *Is your Christianity only external or also internal?* Being authentic is not simply saying and doing what we feel like saying and doing. It is about being honest about where we are in relationship to God and pursuing what He calls us to do.

2. Beware of drinking from the Devil's Spotify playlist. (14-22)

Paul's answer to the question about eating meat sacrificed to idols is basically two fold: (1) Make sure you are loving others whatever you do. (2) Make sure you are running as hard as you can

away from involvement in idol worship whatever you do. Otherwise, Paul would say, you are free to do what you want in this area! Paul makes it clear that there are spiritual realities at play in worship and worship meals that go beyond what people think about those things. Participation in the Lord's Supper is a real spiritual fellowship with Christ in His body and blood! Participation in a pagan worship meal is a real spiritual fellowship with demons! To worship and fellowship with demons is to bring God's discipline on his children and God's judgment upon unbelievers.

False religion is a lie, but a lie fostered by demons and participation in false religion is fellowship with demons; which we must avoid. Most of us are not tempted to worship in an idol's temple or to attend the worship services of other religions. But if we were, this passage would clearly forbid it. It also, in principle, forbids (along with other Scripture) participation in the occult (seances, ouija boards, etc). But are there other ways in which we might 'eat and drink' at an idol's table and feed on the 'doctrine of demons'? For instance, through music. The Corinthians did not see the spiritual implications and dangers in pagan worship because they knew that idols were not real. We may also, in theory, reject the idea of life outside of Christ but 'eat and drink' music that feeds our hearts on lies and makes an impact that we would not expect. Should we beware of fellowship with demons (in some lesser sense than pagan worship, but in some significant sense) through music (the worship of those who reject God and His truth). (Ecclesiastes 7:2-6; 1 Timothy 4:1) *Are you avoiding fellowship with demons?* To eat and drink at the table of lies is to fellowship with demons. We need to be aware of the doctrines of demons. Worldly philosophy and a secular worldview does great damage.

3. Beware of being too easily pleased by simply pleasing yourself. (23-33)

Paul tells the Corinthians that they can eat meat sacrificed to idols under two conditions: (1) They buy the meat in the market and do not ask whether it was sacrificed to an idol. (2) They go to an unbeliever's home and do not ask whether the meat served was sacrificed to an idol. The issue is not whether the meat is contaminated by the pagan sacrifice (it is not); the question is whether one can eat meat outside of a pagan worship service without defiling his conscience or leading someone else to defile their conscience and/or embrace pagan worship. The first issue is not the meat itself but the worship of God in Christ versus the worship of the pagan gods. The second issue is that of loving others and being willing to deny ourselves in order to pursue their happiness in God through Christ.

I am to pursue my happiness in God by pursuing the happiness of others in God even when it means denying myself in certain situations. (Acts 20:32-35) *Are you pursuing your happiness in God?* To glorify God is to be pleased with Him above all and to live to please Him above all. Who or what do you think will satisfy your soul? Who are you living to please?

Conclusion

Is your goal in life to love others as God commands or to simply pursue what you want to do?

Are you following Christ or the culture of self?