

24ID3728

1 Corinthians 10:14-33 – What’s for Dinner?

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September 11, 2024

Let’s open our Bibles tonight to 1 Corinthians 10:14. We’re going to continue tonight in this study through 1 Corinthians.

Paul wrote this letter to this church that he planted over an eighteen-month period, but it had been several years since he’d been there; seven or eight years, maybe. He was currently in Ephesus planting a church there, where he would be for some three years. But lately to Ephesus had come some of the church leaders from Corinth, some of the congregation as well, and they began to share with Paul the difficulties that this young church was facing in the life and in the city of a very perverse bunch of folks, mostly idolaters; and Paul felt led to write.

His correspondence consisted of at least one letter that we don’t have (it’s been mentioned in chapter 5:9). We have these two letters in your Bible, 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul was a loving pastor. He cared for the folks in the church there, and he wrote to them as a father, even called himself that. He said, “You have a lot of teachers, you don’t have many fathers” (1 Corinthians 4:15). And so in some ways he’s in-your-face (kind of) as a dad would be but always with the compassion to see them do better. And I think in the context of us studying it, I think we get to see what a lot of other churches faced. These are the kinds of problems that churches have all the time. And as the enemy wants to oppose God’s work and the church growth, these are the kinds of things that we have to deal with. So it’s relevant, I think, for today. The body was stagnant; they were settled in. They were carnal. They really needed a good fathering “what for,” if you will. And he’s covered a lot of issues. In fact, every one of the issues he covers, he covers fairly in-depth, and he compartmentalizes them so they’re hard to miss.

So he started off after the first nine verses saying, “I know God’s been doing a work there. I know you belong to the Lord but, look, there’re a lot of problems.” But then starting in chapter 1:10 and going forward, Paul talked first about the divisions that were amongst the saints that were taking sides based on the pastor they liked better. Paul had been there for a while, Apollos had been there apparently, Peter had been in and out of there for some time. And so they began to divide based on education and glibness of tongue, and Paul just said, “None of us died for you.” He talked to them about worldly judgments and the tolerance of sin in the church, how that church folks out of Corinth were actually suing each other before the world’s courts and saying, “This is where we want to get our judgment and our wisdom from.” He talked to them about the culture, determining their practices. He spent a lot of time talking about marriage and remarriage and divorce. And then, beginning in chapter 8, he talked to them about liberty; and it’s a long series of chapters. In fact, we’ll finish chapter 10 tonight. Paul kind of switched gears (beginning next week) but still has that theme (kind of) to govern

some of the things he says. But Paul talked about how we can use our freedom in Christ now that we're saved and when not to use it, and what kind of responsibility comes with the liberty that we have, and warning us that we should never allow what God has allowed us to have to become a liability.

So back in chapter 8, he began with what was the hot button of the day and that was there was meat that came out of idol temples (and there were tons of them), and it was sold at market, and it was cheap. Because most of that meat (some of it) was offered to these idols, but the rest was either returned to the people who would sell it to the meat markets or kept by the priests of these idol-worshipping places, and they would sell it as well. So the issue in the church became – should we ever eat that kind of food or not? Some folks, who knew where it came from because they came from those lifestyles, were reticent to eat any of it. Other folks, who were a little weak in their conscience, thought this wasn't a really good idea. But then there were those who could have cared less. "I'm saved. Meat's got nothin' to do with what I eat. It's certainly got nothin' to do with my relationship with the Lord. And look, it's cheap. I can get a lot of it. I eat it with joy. It's my liberty. And you've got a problem with that, it's your problem!" And that kind of attitude began to hurt and stumble and damage the weaker brothers and sisters in the body. And Paul gets all over them, "Look, this isn't how we get there from here together." So Paul agreed with them that their argument and their assessment of idols was that they really are nothing and that meat or the lack of it is not a diet issue; it has nothing to do with drawing you closer to the Lord. He said back in chapter 8, which I think was kind of the key verse there, in verse 9, "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak." A few verses later he writes, in verse 12, "But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ." And then he says this, "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat again. I don't want to hurt him. My liberty has now been checked by the love of God in my heart." So, knowledge frees us, but love restrains us to behave in such a way that we can all make it there together.

In chapter 9, Paul then turns to a personal example to illustrate – since he's talked about the meat and all – and he uses himself. He'd been their pastor for years, he's talked to them about the fact that he should have a personal right to expect their support because he'd been the one that had led them to the Lord, had spent the better part of a year and a half with them. He had led them to the Lord, and he had led them in the Lord. And Paul argued that that kind of support was pretty much a normalcy; they had supplied it to some of the other pastors. He goes on, and he says, "Soldiers and farmers and businessmen and laborers all get to eat the fruit of their own labors first." And so he argued from the standpoint of logic and typical. But then he went to Deuteronomy 25:4, and he said, "Look, even the law says that you shouldn't muzzle the ox that treads out the grain." I mean, he's working to crush the grain; he gets to eat of it. His labor gets to feed him. And then, sarcastically, Paul says, "I don't think the LORD just wrote that for the ox." In other words, learn the lesson. Yet through all that, Paul said, "Even though I have a right and a liberty to expect that, I would certainly never ask that of you because it may stumble someone or keep them from Jesus. And if that's the case, I don't want it. I just want to see people come to know the Lord." And Paul mentioned the need to become all things to all men, to run the race to win, to

practice self-denial and self-control, keep your eyes on the prize, he said. And then he said, in chapter 9:12, "If others are partakers of this right, are we not the more? Nevertheless, we will not use this right, but endure all things lest we would hinder the gospel of Christ." Three verses later, verse 15, "But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void." And then, down in verse 24, "Don't you know that he who runs...they all run, but only one gets the prize? So I want to run in a way that I can obtain it."

Then last week we came to chapter 10, and Paul turned from the Olympics (chapter 9) to the Old Testament history of the first generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt. And he portrayed them as the believers in the sense that these first-generation saints had been delivered by God's power from Egypt, had been forgiven for their obstinacy by His grace, had been led by His Spirit and yet, because of their unwillingness to die to themselves, if you will, they found themselves delivered into God's judgments. They fell back into old affections. They didn't fully respond to the LORD as their deliverer. And so Paul, in the first thirteen verses of chapter 10, says that the privileges that they were given should require a faithful response from them and yet it wasn't found there. And he gave five examples of how this privilege by the Old Testament saints was set aside and, as a result, they suffered a loss of fellowship with God, they lost His power, they lost peace. And in fact, in verse 12 of chapter 10, we read, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." And he wanted to be sure that the Corinthians were taking this stuff seriously. The warnings of the Old Testament, by the way.....this was written to predominantly Gentile Christians as well, that they should by now know the Jewish Old Testament. We need that book. People go, "Oh, I'm a New Testament....." No. You need the whole thing. The LORD didn't write twice what He needed to. He gave you everything you needed.

So tonight we're going to start in verse 14; we're going to head to the end of the chapter. The lessons are fairly straight-forward, I think. He's going to return to this discussion of meat offered to idols but this time give us some further insights into how these Corinthians, though wise, were not living and loving one another, and so Paul will return to this issue. And I think for me, reading the book.....when somebody commits chapters 8, 9, 10 – lots of verses – and returns to the argument, it must have been a pretty divisive issue. But I think it teaches us that the enemy seems to be able to stir up people along the lines of freedoms that, despite being called to be compassionate, we find ourselves digging our heels in as if somehow our ways are more important than the life of the church as a whole. And so the strong – we read about them in chapter 8 – will now say, "Not only is it okay for us to eat meat offered to idols – and I don't care – but if they have a good smorgasbord at the old pagan temple, I'm going to go in there and eat. It's nothin' to me. I'm free." And Paul literally now says, "I don't think you've got the whole story. Time out."

Verse 14, "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say." The word "therefore," as always in the Scriptures, attaches whatever has been said to what is about to be said; and to be specific, back to verse 7

where that last example was used of Aaron and the golden calf and the people worshipping and the judgment of God and how they had gotten caught up in the worship of an idol from which God had drawn them away. You can read the story in Exodus 32. If the Corinthians were to learn anything, they should have learned from their fathers and from their history that idolatry is deadly. It is a destructive force in the life of God's people. Throughout the ages, idolatry has always been associated with every possible kind of sin, and it never is anything but presented to us as a place where God's people can be ensnared. Every generation, every idolatry that insults God degrades man. Paul, when he wrote to the Romans (chapter 1:18-25), talked about those who had no excuse because "the invisible attributes of God are clearly seen, they're clearly understood. His eternal power and his Godhead; without excuse, they knew God, they wouldn't worship Him as God." And then Paul says, "So, instead, other than going with what they've been shown they became futile in their thoughts, foolish in their hearts. They said they were wise, but they became fools, and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into these corruptible things like birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." And then it says, "God just gave them up to their uncleanness, dishonoring themselves even amongst themselves."

So, idolatry is the mark of someone who's lost his awareness of God's presence. Now Paul is concerned for this church. And he says....I like the fact in verse 14 he calls them his brethren. "You're my brethren." From everything that I've read so far, Paul could have called them a lot of things. At the top of my list might not have been "my brethren," which is a very endearing term for family member. His heart and his intention in writing to them was to be sure they understood that they were precious in his sight as well as the Lord's.

And then he says this, "Flee from idolatry." "You should run away from idols." Contrary to the cavalier attitude that the folks had about the temples in Corinth and eating the meat offered to idols as no big thing, Paul encourages them to put a distance between it and them; that they should realize that there is a dangerous.... not the meat but the association can have a dangerous influence in their lives. It may not be anything, but it has the power to destroy. And so in your freedom you should always recognize that there's also a warfare.

He says, in verse 15 to them, "You're smart; you know the Lord. Judge what I'm telling you." He will give them an illustration to help them think it through that somehow this careless association, you know, "Whatever" kind of attitude, with these idols and their worship; and in particular, he'll mention going into an idol temple for a meal as if that's all part of the liberty that you can use. And Paul will say, "Wise up." Maybe the best example I can use is if you've been saved by the Lord from alcoholism, probably God's not going to call you to the bar to witness. Probably would be better if you'd just stay out of there altogether. It's not your place. "Oh, I've been saved." I get it. Go somewhere else. "Be wise," says Paul, "and hear what I have to say. And make the comparisons I'm giving you out of the Old Testament. Let me apply them to the New Testament practice of communion," which had a place and a practice in the early church.

So here's what Paul says, verse 16, "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" (fellowship) "of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?"

So Paul, writing to this church, sets two tables side by side: the table of the Lord, communion, upon which the saints (regularly, at this point) were commemorating the death and the burial and the resurrection of the Lord using the symbols of a bread and of a cup that represented His body and His blood shed; and he sets next to it a table where the idol worshippers come to honor whichever deity they are there to worship, and the meal that is set before them brings them into fellowship, if you will, with that deity. Some believers felt they could go in without consequence - after all, an idol is nothing - but Paul disagrees. At that point, going in and associating with the symbolism and the representation, Paul said, "Now you have a problem." When the cup was raised at communion, the saints partaking took it, and they brought themselves into - the word is "*koinonia*" - communion. In other words, whatever the elements in communion represent - the blood Jesus shed, the body that was broken - they have a significance to us. They aren't actually the body and blood of Jesus. I was taught that in the Catholic church; that's not biblical. Transubstantiation is a Catholic doctrine, not a biblical one. But, at the same time, we are uniquely worshipping what God has given us to identify with and to trust in. At the table where the idol worshippers came to give honor, they also find themselves in fellowship or in communion with that which they are representing. So, with the bread and the cup - the broken body of our Lord, His blood shed - we, in faith, recognize Him as our Lord. When we partake of the Lord's table, in essence we partake of the Lord's sacrifice, which the elements of communion represent.

When Jesus was ministering to the crowds who had run around the lake and, "Where have You gone?" and Jesus said, "You're just seeking Me not because of who I am or what I have to offer you but because I fed you." And He told them not to labor so much for the meat that perishes (John 6:26-27). But then, with the large crowd that had found Him, He said, there in John 6:41, 49-53, "I am the bread that comes down from heaven. Your fathers ate bread and manna in the wilderness. They died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven. If you eat of it, you'll never die." And then He said this to them, "This bread is the bread that comes down from heaven, which your fathers ate and died. But if you eat of this bread, you will live forever. Unless you eat My body and drink My blood, you have no life in you. There's no life to be had." And you read there that a lot of the people went, "Ugggh," and they walked away and followed Him no more. And Jesus said to the disciples (John 6:66-68), "Are you leaving, too?" and they

said, "Well, no, Lord. You have the words of eternal life." And then Jesus said this (John 6:63), "The words that I spoke to you are spiritual." Not literal; they're spiritual in their life.

Communion identifies; it is a place of honor that we give to the Lord for our deliverance. So we drink and we declare, we put our faith in His shed blood, we eat, we identify His body broken for us. The main elements of communion, in one sense, are the bread and the wine. But they symbolize our identity and our identification with Jesus and His work for us. So, we remember His work, we agree together, we're made one together as we look to the Lord who saved us.

In verse 18, Paul then turns to make the same point regarding the Old Testament saints and the place of communion with God that they had through the sacrifices. In many of the offerings, as you go back to the Old Testament, they consisted of only a portion of the offering that was brought to be offered to the LORD, and the rest of it was returned to the worshipper who was then encouraged to sit and eat before the LORD's presence so that the same nourishment that they received from the offering was shared by the LORD that they brought it to; they became in fellowship, if you will, with the LORD. They ate the same offering; fellowship held in common. It became a bond between the two.

So both at the altar of the Old Testament sacrifice, at the Lord's table in the New Testament, the participant is brought into fellowship with those who sit at the table. It was the altar of the LORD in the Old Testament; it's the table of the Lord in the New Testament. But it brought not only you and me in fellowship with God, but it brought us in fellowship with each other.

And then Paul turns that around in verse 19 and verse 20 by saying this, "This truth is now applied when you would attend a pagan ritual where folks gather to eat a portion of the meat offered to a particular pagan god in a particular pagan temple. They, too, have communion with each other but not with Almighty God. In fact, those who attend there and eat the meat offered to idols are having fellowship with the devil who is the force behind the pagan altar and all that it represents." Paul would agree with them in the sense to say, "These useless idols have behind them a power from hell, and he sits behind them to turn the hearts of men away from God so that they might worship whatever it is and end up with nothing, emptiness." Paul had said, back in chapter 8:4, an idol was nothing; it represented a god that doesn't exist. He says it again in verse 19, here. "Am I saying that an idol is anything or what is offered to an idol is anything?" And that's his point. But here's his application: behind that piece of wood or that stone that's been carved or that intricate and gross design is the representation of these various deities that operate at the power of hell, are opposed to God, offer man a way out, steal from man that hunger for the Lord, and seek to bring you into bondage. And you are far more accessible to his whims when you trivialize or join in the worship of idols, opening the door to the devil. This isn't just eating meat, now, from the market; this is now entering into the worship of false gods. And Paul wants to drive that home.

The Old Testament warnings of what spiritual life behind these symbols is everywhere. You read Leviticus 17:7 and Moses, in reading the law, says, "They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they've played the harlot. This shall be a statute for every generation." Be careful when you enter in to begin to have fellowship and association with idols that are in and of themselves nothing, but when they're gathering together with others to worship, you now are drawn into that oneness with those that are there. There's a spiritual component. When we read Psalm 106, towards the end – verse 35 or so, and the psalmist is writing out about what happened to the children of Israel as they came out of Egypt and all, then they went on and they said, "They began to serve idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, sacrificing innocent blood. And with these sacrifices to these idols of Canaan, they polluted the land. They defiled their works, they played the harlot." They associated themselves with what is really a reality – the demon that sits behind the idol. And it's something that he wanted them to take to heart.

Some Corinthians, in their liberty, saw no problem sitting at dinner in an idol temple with foods that had come from there. Fine. But Paul said, "Look, don't be so flippant as to show up to worship and identify and be a participant in the spiritual union that takes place." Verse 20 – straightforward. "I don't want you to have fellowship," intimate union, "with demons." There can obviously be no compromise to this frightening kind of statement of facts. A person who goes to a fortune teller, a spiritist, take out your Ouija board.....hey, you're asking for trouble. You want to find it? You can probably find it. There're safer places to go. Go to church. Hang out with believers. Stay away from the association where the devil does his best work. It is no place for you and me to be. The safest thing is, Paul says, "Be wise," when he started this section, and, "flee idolatry." There's no sense exposing yourself to the enemy's influence.

Verse 21, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" Look, we have to avoid it altogether because we're worshippers of God, and He wants exclusive commitments from us. In other words, this verse says you can't do both. The prohibition here goes back to the second commandment, I think. Exodus 20:4-6, "Don't make for yourself a carved image or any likeness that's in heaven above or the earth below, or in the water under the earth. Don't bow down before them. Don't serve them. I'm the LORD your God. Me only shall you worship." So Moses, when he set the people down in the book of Deuteronomy – the book of Deuteronomy is a sermon that Moses gave over a thirty-day period before he handed them off to Joshua, and it really is a compilation or a revisiting of all that had gone before - but in chapter 32:15-17, he said to them about the fact that when they grew fat and they began to get an attitude of, "We can do this on our own," he said, "then they forsook God who made them. They scornfully esteemed the God of their salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with their false gods, with abominations they provoked Him to jealousy, and they began to sacrifice to demons and not to God; to gods they didn't know, to new gods, to new arrivals." And then he spoke to them about their years in the desert – that they didn't need to be there, but they provoked God. They didn't serve the LORD.

So, there has to be an understanding of you and me. When we have communion, there's an association, which is why later on (and we're going to read in this book-chapter 1), that at communion there were folks who showed up drunk and tried to eat more than everybody else before everyone was taken care of. And then he says, "They haven't discerned the Lord's body in this whole encounter. And because they're unwilling to discern the Lord, there are some folks that are sick; there are some folks that have died in judgment." And he said, "Don't come to communion that way because there's this association." The rhetorical question of Paul, here, suggests that God, in His jealousy over you, and then in His wrath, may judge you for your unfaithfulness. And after all, you're not stronger than He is. We can be overcome by these demons; He cannot. So, make sure that you're submitting to Him who is able to keep you. That's the principle.

Now he says this, "All things," verse 23, "are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being." Now that's the same principle that we started back in chapter 6 when Paul said exactly the same thing. Even if we have freedom to do everything, let's face it; it's not all to our benefit. Paul's not saying at all that sin is ever okay. But in the areas of personal liberty, it's a wide road of public opinion, and there must be convictions that are governed by: do they edify others, do they help us to grow, is it a contribution to the welfare of others, or is it just all about me and what I want and what I think I deserve? And notice that, in verses 23 and 24, the two controlling factors governing our use of our liberty in these gray areas – in terms of what we will allow – are whether they help us grow and whether they promote growth in the lives of others. Are they good for us? Are they good for others? And when it is not, then you should say to yourself, "This is not liberty; this is sin, and it's now become a liability."

You know, if you know anything about the old West, one of the things about the new territories opening up for the pioneers was there was a lot of really hostile people running ahead to stake claims on land and then trampling the weak to get what they wanted and exploiting the law-abiding by the ruthless.

Well, in the body of Christ, our freedoms are governed by love and a consideration for the weak. Liberty is never to become a license, and that's what Paul is saying here.

So here's his application. Great counsel, by the way. Verse 25, "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for 'the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness.'" So what about the meat? Here's a summary of what he began in chapter 8. If it's being sold in the butcher shop, don't ask where it comes from. Just buy it, eat it, and go home and enjoy the ribeye. Because from a meat market, there is no association of that meat with an idol. It's in a butcher shop; it's where it belongs. It's where you go to buy meat; it's not where you go to worship. So why not ask? Well, it might offend those who are weak and still make that association in their minds, though they don't need to. It's just meat, says Paul. Buy it, eat of it, everyone's happy, everyone's filled. Paul does not say become a vegetarian, which I'm happy to report to

you. And then he quotes out of Psalm 24, which is a wonderful Messianic psalm, to say it may have come from an idol temple, but it first came from God's hands. And so, since I'm not in an idol place, there's no association with that idol, I can receive this with thanksgiving, eat it for nourishment, not bother to track where it came from, and it should be a good answer even for the weakest conscience. Just don't ask! Go eat, man. What do you need to know for?

Verse 27, "If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for conscience' sake." Same advice, really. Do not be afraid to have dinner at the house of an unbeliever worrying about, "I wonder where the meat he's serving has come from. If you think he's going to make an issue out of it, resolve it before you go." The worst witness – and Paul is interested in people getting saved – is in the middle of his graciousness towards you, to have to stop and go, "By the way, where did this come from?" And when they tell you, you go, "Oh ho ho, I'm not gonna be able to stay, bro. Holier-than-thou is me." And that holier-than-thou posturing will do little to reach people with the love of Jesus. You know, that's often the way a well-meaning legalist does things. They take unnecessary prejudices and they try to lay them on people, and it's their scruples, and it isn't yours, and you end up suffering as a result. So Paul said, "Just go to dinner." "Oh, this is good. I love it, the way....oh, the seasoning is wonderful." Eat, enjoy, be a witness.

And then Paul says this, verse 28, "But if anyone says to you, 'This was offered to idols,' do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you and for conscience' sake; for" (and same verse) "the earth is the LORD's and all its fullness." There's an exception, and that is when the heathen makes special note that this meat is associated with idols and places value on it because, to him, it has spiritual significance. Then you are now obligated to stand up for Jesus and say, "Yeah, that's not my association, and I'm sorry I can't have that, and I can't participate in that because I know the truth that lays behind those idols, and I'm going to refuse to eat it." And Paul is very clear, and he says, "Refuse it for your witness' sake, for the sake of the people you're trying to reach, and refuse it for your conscience' sake, knowing demons are behind those idols that seek to bind. Just don't eat. Because once they say, 'By the way, let me tell you, this came from Apollos' place, the sale was on,' it is no longer you at stake, but it is their spiritual well-being, and you have to take a stand." It's no longer a matter of simple politeness but a principle and a spiritual battle. You can't give in at this point. Make sense?

So Paul again quotes out of Psalm 24 in support of his counsel here, but now it is a matter of who is the LORD and who is the idol. Now it no longer came from the LORD but now we have to worship the real God who made heaven and earth, not these idols. God is sovereign, and we must stand for that which He has demanded if our host wants to make it an issue. I'll stand for the Lord.

Now there are a few issues like that facing us today. It could be applied to someone offering you a drink. It's interesting. You go do weddings, and they always have toasts. Some people use wine, some people use champagne. They go, "Pastor, would you join us in a toast?" I just go, "Yeah, sure," I don't care. Until they say this, "That's wine,"

and I go, "Yeah, I can't." Not because I don't have a problem with it, I just don't want them to have a problem with it. So if they tell me, then I'll refuse. If they say nothing, I don't care. It's this much wine; I think I'll be all right. Big boy. It's gonna take more than this to get me..... (Laughing) One's a witness; the other one's just leave it go, leave it alone. No big deal....to me, anyway. "Would you lead the toast? This is real vodka." Probably wouldn't. Can't. Paul says the same thing here.

Verse 29, "Conscience, I say, not your own, but that of" (somebody else) "the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?" Now Paul says you do it for conscience' sake but not your own, but for someone else's conscience that you know could be offended by your freedom in Christ. And then he asked the question, "Why should anyone speak evil of me for eating food for which I've just thanked the Lord for?" And Paul's answer is, "You've thanked the Lord, fine. But the obligation is not about you but about them. It's their conscience that you need to be concerned about." It doesn't stop with, "Lord, thanks for the food." It stops with, "Lord, thanks for the food, and I want to help my brother."

So verse 31, "Therefore," (here's the application, here's the conclusion) "whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." The bottom line is given to us in two (kind of) principles: first to the Lord and then to men. To the Lord, whatever you do, make sure He gets honored. It's a great principle, isn't it? Whatever you do, make sure He gets honored. You know that old book about what would Jesus do? It's a proper question. What would Jesus do? What would He think? How would He feel about this? Because He said, "I do always those things which please the Father" (John 8:20). I'd like to tell you that's true of my life; I know it is not. But I'd love for it to be. There is no glory brought to the Lord when I exercise my liberty and stumble another brother or put a stumbling block before an unbeliever.

So, notice in verse 32, whether you are the religious or you are the idolater or you're the saint: seek to bring men to Jesus, for that glorifies God, and stay away from anything that would only be focused on your profit rather than the profit of many, that they might be saved.

It's pretty straightforward, isn't it? And he will say in chapter 11:1, which might very well have been a verse that should have gone at the end of this chapter because the chapter divisions are put in much later to help you find your place, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." He invites the Corinthians to follow his example. Use your liberty wisely. Amen?

Next week, we're going to look at losing your head over head coverings. That ought to be fun.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

September 16, 2024