

Sunday, June 11, 2017—I Corinthians 10:24-30: Understanding the Issue of the Conscience

Introduction/Review

- Last Sunday during our time together we covered verses 18 through 23. In this section, we saw Paul making his case for why the Corinthians needed to flee from idolatry back in verse 14.
- In verse 23 we once again encountered what I had previously termed Paul’s decision-making model (I Cor. 6:12).
 - As believers, we need to get past the question of is something lawful or permissible and deal with the following questions instead:
 - Is it expedient? Is it profitable?
 - Does it edify?
 - Am I allowing it to have power over me?
- I Corinthians 10:23—just because something is lawful does not mean that it is good for your edification.
- Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines the verb “edify” as the following:
 - To build, in a literal sense. [Not now used.]
 - To instruct and improve the mind in knowledge generally, and particularly in moral and religious knowledge, in faith and holiness.
 - Edify one another (I Thess. 5:11)
 - To teach or persuade. [Not used.]
- Just because something is “lawful” does not mean that it builds up spiritually speaking.
 - Romans 15:2—“edification” = “A building up, in a moral and religious sense; instruction; improvement and progress of the mind, in knowledge, in morals, or in faith and holiness.” (*Webster’s 1828*) (I Cor. 14:3)
 - Ephesians 4:12, 16, 29—“edifying” = “Building up in Christian knowledge; instructing; improving the mind.” (*Webster’s 1828*)

- I Corinthians 10:23—there may not be any law against idolatry for believers living during the dispensation of grace but it is certainly not expedient/profitable and it certainly does not edify.
- Recall from last week that decisions based upon the question of “does it edify” extend beyond the selfish considerations of an individual believer and place the welfare and benefit of another beyond one’s own. This concept is seen very clearly in verse 24.

I Corinthians 10:24

- **Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*.**
- The verb “seek” is a present active imperative statement. Which means that Paul is not merely suggesting the proper course of action for believers. Rather he is emphatically stating the believers should behave in this manner.
- The imperative command in the first half of the verse is followed with the contrast “but” in the second half. So, believers should not be merely seeing to their own needs and wellbeing “but” also to the needs and wellbeing of their fellow saints.
- This concept is entirely consistent with what we saw in verse 23 about edifying.
 - Romans 12:3
 - Philippians 2:3
 - I Corinthians 10:12

I Corinthians 10:25-26

- **Whatever is sold in the shambles, *that* eat, asking no question for conscience sake: 26) For the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.**
- *Shambles*—is an only English word to describe the market where the butcher’s meat is sold. Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines the word “shambles” as follows:
 - “The place where butcher's meat is sold; a flesh-market.”
- Paul tells the Corinthians to go ahead and eat the meat that is sold in the “shambles” without questioning its whether it was offered unto idols. Why? Because the earth is the Lord’s and Paul knows that it is not practical or possible that all the Corinthians will be able to produce their own meat. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with eating the meat sold “in the shambles.”

I Corinthians 10:27

- **If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast*, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.**
- Notice that Paul is not forbidding the Corinthians from eating with unbelievers. Under what circumstances would an unbeliever bid/invite a believer to a feast? Don't you suppose that the Corinthians had unsaved friends and family who probably were still involved in idolatry?
- Paul tells the Corinthians that they are free to eat whatever is set before for them at the feast without questioning where the meat came from for "conscience sake."

I Corinthians 10:28

- **But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:**
- Note the contrast "but" at the beginning of verse 28. If a believer learns that a piece of meat has been "offered in sacrifice unto idols" Paul emphatically instructs the Corinthians not to eat it.
- The verb "eat" is once again in the imperative mood. Paul is commanding the Corinthians not to eat under such conditions.
- There are two reasons why they are instructed not to eat under the conditions outlined in verse 28:
 - For the sake of the person who offered them the meat.
 - For conscience sake.
- Notice the immediate and long-term considerations here.
- The reason believers must refrain from eating meat under such conditions is not because eating will pollute them (see verse 27), for they know that there is no such thing as an idol (I Cor. 8:4-6), but for the sake of the unbeliever who offered it to them, who in the context is undoubtedly an idol worshiper.
- II Corinthians 4:2—Paul does not want the believers conduct to confirm/commend the unbelievers idolatrous practice.

I Corinthians 1:29

- **Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another [man's] conscience?**

- Verse 29 makes it clear that Paul is not speaking in this context about the individual believer’s own “conscience” but of the one who offered the meat scarified unto idols i.e., unbeliever from the previous verse.
- I Corinthians 8:7-13—I think Paul also has the conscience of the weaker brother in view in I Corinthians 10 as well. This would be the longer-term consideration of how the action might affect the conscience of a weaker brother in verse 28.
 - Romans 14:13
- At the end of the verse Paul raises a very important question, “Why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience?” Our liberty is limited in the sense that what we say and do impacts ourselves as well as others. Therefore, believers must consider how what they say and do will impact others.
 - I Corinthians 10:23-24
 - I Corinthians 8:13
 - Romans 14:19-21
 - Galatians 5:13

I Corinthians 10:30

- **For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?**
- I Timothy 4:4—what if one receives the meat offered unto idols in the approach spiritual manner? Does that make eating okay?
- According to Paul, not in the context of I Corinthians 10. See comments on verse 29. If the eating of meat scarified to idols has a detrimental impact upon another person, whether that person is a believer or unbeliever; than it is wrong for a believer to eat it.