

“Do All to the Glory of God”

1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

In the previous paragraph Paul has forcefully noted how Christians are not to participate in offering sacrifice in pagan temples before images of false gods. Now he is going to argue that we are at liberty to eat any meat that is sold in the meat market (v. 25) and in the home of the unbelieving (v. 27). He does offer this counsel, “If you are eating meat offered to idols in the home of another individual and if someone present has a problem with it, then do not eat it for the sake of their conscience not yours (vv. 28, 29).

I. The principle for using Christian Liberty (vv. 23-30)

In verses 31 through 11:1 Paul will summarize his primary ideas. How we go about fulfilling these three guiding principles is stated with five actions.

A. The principle repeated (vv. 23, 24)

- Permissible over expedient (v. 23a)

As believers there is an enormous yes to the Christian life. The yes is not for unbiblical behavior, but it is a yes in those matters where the Scripture is silent. The no to the yes is when it encroaches on the conscience of others whether a believer or an unbeliever.

- Edification over gratification (v. 23b)

“The positive construction of the spiritual strength of the church is Christ’s goal (Eph. 2:20-22).”

- Others over self (v. 24)

We have allowed our personal preferences to take precedence over the larger truth of a God-centered worship and lifestyle.

Seeking the greater good of the body of Christ does not negate making the hard choices, but it is realizing that the hard choice is the most loving action that at times must be taken.

B. The principle illustrated (vv. 25-27)

- Liberty over legalism (vv. 25-27)

What I find interesting about this paragraph is that it is taking place in the context of a private home. It is not taking place in the context of the church gathered. I do not believe the fellowship at large is to acquiesce to the conscience of the weak or to that of the unbelieving.

Continued on the other side...

a. The meat market (vv. 25, 26)

Everything we possess is from God. The ultimate source of all food, both animal and vegetable is from God (Ps. 24:1; 1 Tim. 4:4, 5). When you go to the store to purchase food do not be overly sensitive as to where the food came from.

b. The private dinner (v. 27)

Paul's passion was to win the lost and to edify the believer. His response to both would be different. With the unbelieving he would eat if asked and with the believing he would abstain if necessary. This is the purist expression of Christian liberty. We have the right to eat or to abstain depending on the context in which we find ourselves.

How many times do you think Jesus practiced what Paul just preached? Remember that Jesus was accused of being a friend of sinners. Jesus ate with unwashed hands. Jesus ate in the house of tax collectors and gentiles.

C. The principle applied (vv. 28-30)

- Condescension over condemnation (vv. 28-30)
 1. Give way to the weaker conscience (vv. 28, 29a)
 2. Do not judge the stronger conscience (v. 29b)
 3. Do not slander the stronger conscience (v. 30)

II. The purpose of Christian Liberty (10:31-11:1)

Here Paul gives three guiding purposes in the use of one's Christian liberty.

- A. The glory of God - The pattern to do all to God's glory (v. 31 [Do everything to the glory of God])

Whether you eat the meat or do not eat the meat or whatsoever you do, do it with God's glory in mind.

- B. The good of man - The pattern to maintain proper relations to all men (vv. 32, 33 [Give no offense])
- C. The godly example - The pattern to follow the apostolic example (11:1 [Be followers of Paul])