

My Good vs. Your Good

I Corinthians 10:23-11:1

Introduction

In chapter 8, Paul dealt with the issue of eating meat offered to idols in light of the importance of a life of love vs. prideful knowledge. Anything that I give priority to over God is idolatry; but idol worship is a totally different thing. Unless you have lived in a culture where idol worship permeates everything you do, it is hard to understand what it means to be a Christian in a society that lives and breathes idol worship.

Isa. 44:15 – “But he also fashions a god and worships it, he makes an idol and bows down to it.” Romans 1:21-24 - “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him...they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

New believers, who were so accustomed to a culture saturated with idol worship, had a hard time separating the idea of meat sacrificed to the idol and the act of idol worship. The real problem was that believers were actually going into the pagan temples to participate in feasts that were dedicated to the false gods.

A. Paul's position: - I Corinthians 8

- Idols are nothing – have no intrinsic value
- Food has no spiritual or moral connection or consequences.
- If my freedom to eat the meat offered to idols causes my brother to be spiritually destroyed, then I have sinned against him and against Christ – because I have put my self first and have forgotten the command to love. Therefore, I will not eat meat again.

B. Flee Idolatry – I Corinthians 10

In chapter 10, Paul picks up the theme of idolatry once again, and warns the church to flee from it. There is a sense in which our participation in the Lord's Supper identifies us with Christ's body and blood (his death for our sins). It is not a ceremony to be taken lightly or casually. The Jews who sacrificed to God also participated in the worship of God through the eating of the sacrifice in some cases.

Once again intimate identification of the sacrifice with the worship is illustrated.

Pagans who ate meat sacrificed to idols were actually participating in demon worship. The idol in itself is meaningless, but behind the

scenes lurks the demon. In view of this, knowingly eating meat offered to idols was a personal identification with those demons.

C. Paul's Principles - I Corinthians 10:23-11:1

Once again the popular excuse for sin pops up its ugly head. “Everything is permissible.” After reminding the Corinthians that not everything is beneficial – which they ought to know by now, Paul sets forth some important principles for the Christian life and gives some instruction of how to handle the problem they faced of meat offered to idols.

Principle #1 - Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. (10:24) This is definitely anti-culture, perhaps even anti-American.

Actions proscribed:

- Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience. Everything God created is good, it all belongs to him. After all, food does not have any moral or spiritual connotations or consequences.
- If invited out to eat, eat what is put before you without raising questions of conscience.
- If challenged by the unbeliever (this has been offered in sacrifice) then do not eat it. You need a clear testimony – believers do not participate in idol worship.

Principle #2 – Do all for the glory of God

Whether you eat or drink or do anything else. Every action, every motive of life should have God as its focus. Fulfilling God's plan, God's will, God's purposes have priority.

Principle #3 - Do not cause others to stumble into sin

My actions influence others. If I vaunt my freedom regardless of its affect on others, I have sinned.

Principle #4 - Seek not my own good but the good of many

I try to please all (have a good reputation) so that they may be saved – sacrifice of self has a goal. Life is not just about me – though that is the mindset of most of us Americans.

Principle # 5 – Follow the example of Christ

Phil. 2:1-16