

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

XIII. Practical Holiness On Issues Of Idolatry

(1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1)

I. Introduction

- A. The people Paul disciplined in Corinth lived in a city that was known for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, *Ibid.*
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. In 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1, Paul gave practical application on holiness on issues of idolatry that directly apply to issues we face today. We study this passage for our insight and edification:

II. Practical Holiness On Issues Of Idolatry, 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1.

- A. The believer was to abstain from meat that was offered to idols in pagan worship, 1 Corinthians 10:14-22:
 - 1. Every believer is directed by God to avoid practicing idolatry, 1 Corinthians 10:14.
 - 2. Applied to eating meat in pagan worship, "partaking in a religious feast means fellowshiping with the one worshiped at that feast. This is true of the Lord's Supper (vv. 16-17), it was true of Israel in O. T. times (v. 18), and it is true of a pagan feast (vv. 19-22)," *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to 1 Cor. 10:14-22; 1 Cor. 10:15-20.
 - 3. "Therefore, believers must not fellowship at pagan feasts since they may open themselves up to demonic attacks (v. 20)," *Ibid.* We cannot fellowship with God at the Lord's Table and partake of the cup of demons in pagan worship as that opens us up to affliction from demons and God's discipline, v. 21-22.
 - 4. [This order would also prohibit us from partaking of communion in churches that hold that the elements in any way become Christ, for Revelation 2:14 shows Christ calling transubstantiation or consubstantiation idolatry, Matthew 13:4, 19, 24-33 teaches that the figurative birds of the air, representing Satan and his demons, will come to settle in churches in Christendom where unbelievers enter and corrupt the teaching until, in Revelation 18:1-3, false religious Babylon the Great will be a haunt of every kind of demon!]
- B. However, as for meat that had been offered to idols but was not eaten in pagan worship, Paul taught that all things were "permissible" for him, but not all things were "beneficial" or "constructive," 1 Corinthians 10:23 NIV. For this reason, no believer was to seek his own good, but the good of others, 1 Corinthians 10:24.
- C. Paul then applied this principle in 1 Corinthians 10:25-30 (as follows):
 - 1. A believer could eat meat that had been offered to idols but was later sold in the market, 1 Cor. 10:25-26:
 - a. Regarding meat that was sold in the "shambles" (KJV), a "seventeenth-century word" for "the meat market" (*Ibid.*, fn. to 1 Cor. 10:25), the believer was free to purchase it for his own use without asking any questions for the sake of conscience, 1 Corinthians 10:25. A spiritually strong, knowledgeable believer knew that the earth and all of its animals belonged to the Lord, that God thus permitted him to eat any humanly edible meat without spiritual restrictions on himself, 1 Corinthians 10:26.
 - 2. However, with meat that had been offered to idols **but was later served in a home**, a believer was to consider the conscience of other weaker people who were present at the meal, 1 Corinthians 10:27-30:
 - a. If an unbeliever invites a believer to a meal offered in his home, the believer was to eat whatever was placed before him without asking questions regarding conscience, 1 Corinthians 10:27.
 - b. However, if anyone present were to tell the believer that the meat being served had been offered in a pagan temple sacrifice, the believer was to refrain from eating it to protect the other person's conscience, v. 28. The mature believer knew that it is not innately sinful for him to ingest the meat, but he was not to eat it lest he influence the weaker believer or unbeliever present who viewed eating it as an idolatrous act to be motivated to practice idolatry by being encouraged to eat the meat in sin, 1 Corinthians 10:29-30.
- D. Accordingly, in all that we do, we should glorify God in not giving offence to Hebrews, to Gentiles, or to the Church of God, 1 Corinthians 10:31-32. The goal is to function in ways that seek the discipling advancements of others around us above doing what we want to do in merely pleasing ourselves, 1 Corinthians 10:33-11:1.

Lesson: *Mature believers were to avoid practicing idolatry by eating meat offered to idols in pagan worship, but they could eat such meat outside of pagan worship only if it did not offend weaker believers or unbelievers present.*

Application: *May we follow Paul's directives on practical holiness regarding issues of idolatry.*