

# 1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

## Part XXIII: The Godly Use Of Personal Spiritual Liberties

(1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1)

### I. Introduction

- A. The sensitive issue of eating meat offered to idols required instruction (1) on opposing idolatry (2) though exercising one's personal liberty (3) while also protecting a weaker brother's conscience.
- B. Paul gave such instruction in 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1, and we view this passage for our benefit today:

### II. The Godly Use Of Personal Spiritual Liberties, 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1.

- A. On the matter of idolatry, the believer has **NO** personal spiritual liberty lest he offend God, 1 Cor. 10:14-22:
  - 1. First, the believer is not at liberty to practice idolatry; it is sin so, he must flee from it, 1 Corinthians 10:14.
  - 2. Paul explained this stand in the realm of meat that was being offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 10:15-22:
    - a. When we believers celebrate the Lord's Table in our communion services, we commemorate our mutual connection to Christ's body and blood by which we were all saved and brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:15-17. This involves a spiritual communion with the Lord.
    - b. This communal type of practice carried the same communal meaning in the case of Old Testament Israel: those who ate parts of the sacrificial animals and offerings that were put on the temple altar were partakers of the altar with the Lord who figuratively consumed what was on the altar, 1 Corinthians 10:18.
    - c. Thus, the same communal activity occurs in eating meat offered to idols **AS one is at an idol worship service**, 1 Cor. 10:19-20a: idols are nothing, but if one eats meat offered to idols at an idol worship service, he leaves himself open to demonic influence, the word "devils" (KJV) being *daimonion*, "demon, evil spirit," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 600; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 168.
    - d. Paul did not want his readers to commune with demons, for one could not commune with God in observing the Lord's Table while also partaking of the table of demons in idol worship, 1 Cor. 10:20b-21.
    - e. Indeed, for a believer to fellowship with demons was to infuriate the Lord by inciting His jealousy for our worship to be given to Him alone, and since He was stronger than the believer, only certain sure and severe divine judgment would occur against a believer for such rebellion against the Lord, 1 Cor. 10:22.
- B. However, on the matters of personal spiritual liberty and protecting a weaker brother's conscience, the believer has complete liberty in his own personal life, but he must restrain the exercise of that liberty as necessary to protect the weaker believer's conscience, 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 (as follows):
  - 1. Paul clarified the overriding principle of exercising one's personal spiritual liberty within the confines of not harming the edification of a weaker believer in 1 Corinthians 10:23-24: all things were lawful for him as an informed believer, including eating meat that had been offered to idols sometime after the idol worship service was finished, but not all such things were helpful or edifying to others.
  - 2. Then, Paul applied this principle in terms of practical application in 1 Corinthians 10:25-33 (as follows):
    - a. Whatever was sold in the marketplace after the idol worship services were finished, informed believers were to have complete spiritual liberty to eat, for that meat belonged to the Lord, 1 Corinthians 10:25-26.
    - b. Then, if invited to a meal, whatever was put in front of the believer, he was at full liberty to eat, asking no question for the sake of conscience as the food belonged to God, 1 Corinthians 10:27.
    - c. However, if a party at the meal mentioned the meat had been offered to idols, revealing he had a weak conscience, to protect his conscience, the informed believer was not to eat it, 1 Cor. 10:28. This restraint was not to be conducted for the sake of the conscience of the one who restrained himself since he was at full liberty to eat the meat, but the restraint was for the weaker brother's conscience, 1 Cor. 10:29-30.
    - d. Thus, in every activity, the believer was to glorify God, giving no offense to anyone -- Jew, Gentile or Church of God -- that he seek the salvation of others above the exercise of his liberties, 1 Cor. 10:31-33.
  - 3. In summary, Paul called us to heed his example on the matter like he heeded Christ's example, 1 Cor. 11:1.

***Lesson:*** *The believer's liberty in Christ does not free him to eat meat while it is being offered in idol worship, for that leads him to fellowship with demons in idolatry, angering God. However, the believer is free to eat such meat after the idol service, but not in the presence of a weaker brother lest it wound his conscience. In other words, the expression of the believer's liberties must be restricted when love for others requires it.*

***Application:*** *May we like Paul and in turn like our Lord Jesus Christ seek not our own profit, but the glory and benefit of God and other people in whether or how we exercise our liberties in Jesus Christ.*