

With Conscience of the Idol

1 Corinthians Chapter Eight



~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God must address practices in this report that are not explicitly forbidden or condoned in the Word of God. Should women wear make-up? Should a Christian eat meat? Is it okay for a Christian to smoke? What about going to the movies or dancing? There are, actually, many so-called “*gray areas*” in the Bible; and people get extremely hung up on them. We began a *HUGELY* controversial section of Scripture in chapter seven; so, why stop now? I trust this report will be helpful to some of you as we examine what Paul has to say about these things.

Remember, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth; and he calls the Corinthians carnal babes. These things mentioned above and that we have been considering in the last several reports are *ALL* carnalities; and the modern church is *NO DIFFERENT* than this church was at this time in which we are studying. Our churches today just happen to be carnal to-the-core; where people make these issues more important than spirituality. So, I deal with them just as Paul dealt with them – and some of you aren’t going to like it – at all.

Diet is a ridiculously popular fad in modern society amongst a whole bunch of people. Eating habits are an essential part of just about every cult and ism known to mankind. Of course, God gave certain restrictions to the nation Israel in the Mosaic Law about what they were to eat and what they were to avoid; and the test was that if it parted the hoof and chewed the cud, then it was proper to consume. That eliminated the pig because the pig parts the hoof but doesn’t chew the cud. Further, certain fowl were designated by name as unfit for human consumption. The list is given in both Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

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However, most people who make up dietary rules and restrictions have no idea what's really on God's list; most people that *DO* know the list cannot tell me what most of those birds are. Take the Ossifrage, for example, any guesses at what that is? Of course, everyone knows what a pig, an eagle and a crustacean are; but, these people who have made up laws for themselves always ignore grace and just make up whatever seems right in their own eyes. Now, friends, let me say: I don't care what you eat or don't eat. Unfortunately, those people don't just stop there, though; they always insist that I follow *THEIR* prescriptions. Well, let's be perfectly clear: I don't report to you. I report directly to my Father in Heaven. So, if you see where this is going, and you don't like it, then please pray for me that the Holy Spirit will straighten me out – or – you are welcome to stop reading. Either way.

Alright, God prescribed the diet for the nation Israel because they were to be a holy people unto Him. Personally, I believe diet is important. There's a huge difference between pork and lamb and chicken; and many doctors tell their patients what they should eat and what they should avoid. Well, that brings the inevitable subject of questionable practices. The Word of God puts up red lights of forbiddance regarding certain things and there is no question or doubt about those things – such as drunkenness, lying, rape, sexual perversions, murder and stealing – there's no use trying to defend those things. The Bible never condemns wine, but it repeatedly condemns drunkenness! The Muslim attempts to justify all of these things by saying they are above the law; but that only makes them common criminals; because criminals always think they are above the law. Uncleaness, fornication – which is sex outside of marriage – and even drugs are all in a very long list of the works of the flesh and unrighteousness Paul gives in Galatians chapter five.

Now, I'm not going to get dragged into an unfruitful debate about the gray areas we come across in life. I simply refuse to argue for or against them. I will leave that debate for other people to discuss with God. I typically won't

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even say if I think these things are a good idea or a bad idea. I know what's right for me in my relationship with Him. If a woman wants to wear mini-skirts and heavy make-up, that's perfectly okay with me. I'll never comment directly on those types of things. There are some women who are newly converted and all they have are risqué clothes. They think they're doing the right thing by going to church – and they are – but they may have to wear those old clothes. Well, they're usually shunned without a second thought. I think it's also very important to understand that different cultures have different ideas of what is acceptable and what isn't. Some people think it's okay to have a glass of wine, but smoking is not okay. If you don't agree with them, you'll be absolutely shut out from their circle. Friends, that's all carnality; and Paul is going to give us one tremendous truth to live by in this chapter regarding it.

If we fail to consider the background of Corinth culture as a society in this epistle, then we're going to miss the entire point of this section of Scripture. The best place to eat dinner in Corinth was not the local steakhouse or upscale restaurant; no, the *BEST* place to eat in Corinth was right there in the temple. Many of the markets were actually owned and operated by the pagan temple. People brought and offered animal sacrifices. This is the one time they brought the best, too; to offer to idols. They left the meat there until the spirit of the idol ate the spirit of the meat and then they sold and ate what was left – which was all of it, of course. The best filet mignon, porterhouse and roast beef available was in that pagan temple, make no mistake.

Because of this practice, newly-converted Corinthian Christians were highly offended; so, they wrote to Paul asking for advice. An example would be that a Christian family would have another Christian family over for dinner, and a picture-perfect filet mignon would be served, and everyone knew where it came from. So, questions were raised, and it was a big problem; mainly because some of them had just come out of rank idolatry and they didn't know how to respond. Naturally, other Christians had no compunction about eating it....

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¹ Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

² And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

~ Unfortunately, we're all guilty of this problem. Most people think that, because they know a few things about the Word of God, they know everything about the Bible. Well, none of us know everything. I find it interesting that people who rarely study their Bible properly, correctly and completely always want to tell the theology professor what they think about certain topics, such as repentance, election, and salvation, in general. Well, friends, I really don't care what stage of spiritual development you're in today – you don't know everything about every subject – and, of course, neither do I. We're all in a learning process. We all have a level of knowledge that should govern us, but love should be the motivating factor. That may mean love for each other, but it *PRIMARILY* means love for the Lord and His Word – and love for the things of Christ – *FIRST*. Sometimes, when we present the Word of God properly, correctly and completely – it can sound altogether unlovely....

³ But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

⁴ As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

~ So, the meat they bought in the temple was *NOT* somehow contaminated by the idol it was offered to. Paul says an idol is “*nothing!*” The instructed Christian was free to enjoy all meats. See, the person who separates himself and refuses to eat certain things just happens to be the one who doesn't have knowledge, friends. The separationists may be separated — but not by spirituality — by ignorance. Those who pretend to

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be so vehemently offended by certain things are just carnal Christians — nothing else. You need to watch those people, too; because they are the ones who will gossip to destroy you. They're generally very, very mean people under the "love, love, love" façade. The man who tells me I can't eat pork may honestly believe he shouldn't eat pork – and that's fine with me – but, I eat what I want to eat. If that offends you then I won't invite you over and serve you a ham sandwich. Further, I'll even abstain from eating pork while I'm around you; but, I won't adopt your rule as my obligation in religion – not by any means. Make a note....

⁵ For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

⁶ But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

⁷ Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

⁸ But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

⁹ But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

¹⁰ For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

¹¹ And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

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12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

~ Remember, Simon Peter had been troubled by this matter of meat. When he was at Simon the Tanners home, the sheet came down from Heaven. Simon Peter had *NEVER* eaten anything unclean according to the Mosaic Law before that. The Lord let down that sheet and said, “*rise and eat.*” Peter replied, “*not so, Lord!*” Can you imagine calling the Lord by Name and at the same time telling Him you aren’t going to obey Him?

Well, that’s precisely the contradiction these people have who want to be under some dietary law or restriction. Simon Peter was sincere – but he was wrong. There’s really no distinction between clean and unclean under grace. If you want to eat pigs feet – bon appetit. But, don’t ask me to join you in a pig feet feast because that sounds positively gross to me. However, you go right ahead. This is a great principle that, If we don’t understand, we don’t fully comprehend the grace of God. As Christians, we have a liberty we need to fully embrace.

We also need to exercise said liberty with a concern for others! We need to make sure what we do doesn’t have a negative effect on our weak brother. There are certain things a Christian leader can do if he wants to - but he shouldn’t do them - because they cause a less-strong believer to question him. The question today isn’t even a matter of right and wrong; it’s a question of the affect our actions have on other Christians. This is what makes knowledge a *very* dangerous thing: how we use it makes all the difference in the world in our Christian walk, our Christian service, and whether or not we can win others for Christ. We must be acutely aware of how we affect the cause of Christ – first and foremost.

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So, we'll break off this leg of our Spiritual Safari here. I realize this report is somewhat repetitive – but this isn't radical. Let's make sure we aren't offending anyone by what we do. I trust God is changing your life by the study of His Word? In our next report, we'll consider more restraints that should be placed on our Christian liberty — for the sake of others. Chapter nine is extremely important in this epistle. I hope you can travel along with us through the entire Word of God ~

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