

Meats and Idols, Knowledge and Love – Part 7

The Earth is the Lord's – 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

Introduction – Why do we thank God for our food? Is there a good biblical reason for instilling this habit in our lives? And does it teach us anything about how we live in a world full of spiritual darkness? As Paul wraps up his argument on “things offered to idols,” he concludes with these three truths: Flee from all idolatry (v14). Enjoy God’s creation with thanksgiving to Him (v25, 26, 30). Always have the glory of God and the profit of others in everything you do (v28, 31-33). Meat which had been previously sacrificed to idols is his application. We will consider some others for Paul exhorts us to mimic him (11:1).

All Things (vv23-24) – Here is a great example of where context matters; we must be careful not to thoughtlessly wrench a verse out of its setting. Paul is not saying that fornication, drunkenness, or coveting is now lawful (see 1 Cor 5:11). Rather, he is saying, “All the things (we are talking about) are lawful...”. He will go on to give examples in vv25ff. The eating of meat sacrificed to idols is a matter of indifference but that is limited to considerations of others. The interests of others trump one’s own preferences and freedoms (Phil 2:2-4). Love trumps knowledge (13:2).

Freedoms and Rights (vv25-27) – Paul doesn’t jump to the illustration of denying himself. First, he establishes that we do have personal freedoms. As Christians, help yourself to the meat sold in a marketplace regardless of where it came from. The meat is not demon possessed. Second, if you are a guest at someone’s table, help yourself to the food offered. And Psalm 24:1 is cited as the reason why.

It’s All the Lord’s (Psalm 24:1-2) – Jewish tradition taught an obligation to thank God for one’s food and Psalm 24:1 was the basis for this teaching. The fact that you are there, that the food is there, that you are going to be able to ingest and enjoy it, is all the work and gift of God. Think about it. Why does anything exist that exists? (John 1:3, Gen 1:1). Why is there any dry, inhabitable land? (Gen 1:2-10, Psalm 24:2, 104:5-9). How did Yahweh do this? (Job 38:4-11, Heb 11:3). Existence exists, the world exists, its fullness exists, those who dwell exist, because God declared and declares it to be so (Col 1:15-17). Therefore, the rights of the Creator over the creation are necessarily absolute. Evolutionism (a demonic idol) wants to deny this because fallen man does not want to acknowledge the Creator, His rights over it, nor give thanks to Him personally for it (Rom 1:18-23). We can even see the decline mentioned in verse 23 of Romans 1. Pagans used to believe in man-like gods and goddesses; now they believe in “*creeping things*” coming up out of primordial goo.

Because God declared His creation “*good*” and “*His*,” Paul argues that those rights extend over God’s created order even in the midst of remaining paganism. This extends to meat offered up to idols, and to nations offered up to their gods (even of demons or humanism). Everything and everyone owes its allegiance to Yahweh as true and rightful King. In the name of Jesus, we may ascend to the LORD (v3) if we have clean hands and a pure heart and have not lifted up our soul to an idol (v4). We do this by giving thanks to God for everything (see 1 Tim 4:4-5).

Your Brother’s Conscience Too (vv28-30) – Now if your brother comes to you and says, “hey, wait a second, that was offered up to an idol” you have a two-fold task. You may not surrender the truth that “*the earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness*” (repeated in v28 in the majority manuscript). But in addition, you must love your brother, which in this case may mean abstaining from the meat for his conscience’ sake. For conscience’ sake and not for false scruples (Col 2:16, 20-21). And that takes wisdom. Love the Lord, love his creation, and love your brother, for “*the earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness.*”

How Shall I Then Live (vv31 – 11:1) – First, give glory to God in everything you do. Love Him first. Second, love those around you by not giving offense where not needed. Do not cause them to stumble. Third, make decisions actively for the profit of others that many may be saved. When we order our lives this way, we will be imitating Paul who is imitating Christ.

Absolutes and Nonessentials – Paul has been clarifying the difference of these two with biblical wisdom and the overriding law of love. We are called to imitate him. Let’s consider a contemporary application. The Bible teaches us that it is possible to partake of sins that you yourself are not committing, sometimes by your mere presence. For instance –

2 John 11 (AV) - *For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*

Eph 5:11 - *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

1 Tim 5:22 - *Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.*

Jude 23 - *but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.*

On the other hand, there is a type of interaction with sinners that ought to be normal and should be done without fear of becoming defiled. For instance –

Matt 11:19 - *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.”*

1 Cor 10:27 - *If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience’ sake.*

1 Cor 5:9-10 - *I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. 10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.*

This is what instructs a Christian baker to never bake a cake for a homosexual wedding reception (or a Christian family to attend that ceremony) and to always bake a cake for a homosexual’s birthday party (and the Christian family to attend the party). It instructs us as to whether to attend your neighbor’s party if they are celebrating the opening of the new Planned Parenthood clinic (where she works), or their wedding anniversary.

The Earth is the Lord’s and All its Fullness - Twice. First, by rights of creation. Second, by rights of redemption and conquest. What does this mean? It means that there is not a non-religious moment in your life. It means we live as confident conquerors and deliverers, imitating Christ and acting in His name. It means that after we have “*let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly,*” and after we sing “*psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord,*” that then, “*whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*” (Col 3:16-17).

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Notes for Little Saints

Paul instructs us in 1 Cor 10:31, whenever we _____ or _____ or whatever we _____ we are to do all to the _____ of God.

How do you give glory to God when you are eating?

1 – Remember that He made everything – Write out Psalm 24:1

2 – Remember that giving thanks makes the food special – Write out 1 Tim 4:4-5

This carries over to everything we do – Write out Colossians 3:17