



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 10:23 - 11:1

“Liberty, Charity, and the Glory of God”

TRANSCRIPT

Well, it's 7:30. Let's open our class with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn to Thee with thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And thank Thee for the word of God which thou hast given to us to give us guidance in our daily lives. We thank Thee for the ministry of the Holy Spirit again. We thank Thee for the way in which he has opened our eyes to see aspects of the truth. And we pray, Lord, that he may continue to be our teacher and that we may be responsive to his teaching.

We thank Thee for those who are here. We pray Thy blessing upon them. We ask Thy blessing upon their families, upon their needs, upon their Christian testimony. We pray also for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon the United States of America and those who are associated in our government, all of them, we ask Thy blessing upon them. Give wisdom and guidance to this nation. May it remain a place where the gospel of Jesus Christ may be freely proclaimed.

And that Lord we ask that our meeting this evening may honor our Savior who has loosed us from our sins by his own precious blood. We're grateful, indeed, for the forgiveness of our sins, for justification, for membership in the family of God, for the family of God each one of them, we pray that Thou wilt use us as instruments in the

purposes which Thou hast for this universe, both now, in the near future, and throughout the remainder of the history of this particular world and on into eternity. We ask Thy blessing now upon our study. May we each be profited by it.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Well, this is the last of our studies on the theme of meats sacrificed to idols, and the problems that it raised in the Christian Church in Corinth. Our subject is “Liberty, Charity, and the Glory of God.” The Pagan sacral feasts and their worship troubled the Christians in two ways. In the first place, there was evidently an appeal of these feasts for the Christians, perhaps because they had grown up before they became to know our Lord in the experience of the meetings, of the feasts. And so they would naturally have a desire to think about them, know about them, and perhaps even from time to time participate in them. We have an evidence of that in chapter 8 in verse 10 for we read there,

“For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?”

And so it evidently was for a period of time in their lives their practice to attend the idol feasts and the ceremonies associated with them. And then when they became Christians, there came the question what about eating meat that has been sacrificed to the false gods or the Pagan idols, because the meat markets were markets in which there was meat from the animals that were sacrificed for the sacral feasts, and so that became a problem with them.

Now, at the sacral feasts, we mentioned, I believe, at least one of our studies, because this is a study that takes us through three chapters of 1 Corinthians, that at the feasts, cups of wine were drunk after a few drops were poured out as a libation to the

particular deity that was being honored by the feast. Paul calls it the "cup of demons," in chapter 10 in verse 21. He even refers to the table of demons.

Now, we pointed out that, according to Paul, the demons don't exist. But, nevertheless, the worship itself is the product of maligned beings who belong, evidently, to the satanic world. We know, of course, that Satan's head of that satanic world, but he has many demons who do serve him in his particular ministry, if we can call it a ministry. It is a ministry, I guess, from the satanic standpoint. The demons that we read of here are demons [gods] that do not exist, but they are -- the worship of them is the product of the evil angelic order in heaven.

Paul may be thinking of Jews who believed in henotheism. Monotheism is the belief in one God only from the Greek word *monos* which means, only or alone -- monotheism. Henotheism is from the Greek word that means one, one god, but the person who believed in henotheism acknowledged there may be other particular gods, but he himself was a believer in one God. And so in the case of these particular chapters, the apostle may be thinking of Jews who believed in henotheism, one god, but not denying the existence of others as does monotheism, one superior God is the belief. So it would be possible for Corinthians, who had been brought up in that atmosphere, to come to believe that Christianity was worship of the one true God, but that did not negate the possibilities of other gods as well. And you'll remember Paul, in his literature, comments upon the fact that there is really only one God. He makes that point, so that for him monotheism was the belief of the apostles.

Now, the problems of the situation set out in chapter 8, verse 7, through chapter 10, verse 33 may be explained perhaps as one of the leading commentators explains it, and I'd like to just point out some of the things that he suggests. He suggests that a Pagan might invite his friends to dinner. Now, the dinner might be held in the temple, just as you for example, all of you here who are members of Northwood Country Club or one of the other country clubs, you are free to invite some of your friends to have dinner

at your particular club. And so in this particular situation, it was possible for individuals to have a dinner but have it served in the temple, which evidently had provision for that.

Now, the temple, while it may be a temple in honor of the god Serapis or Isis or Aesculapius, as the case may be, but nevertheless it might be possible to have a dinner there and you invite in friends among whom may be Christians. And so some of these questions would have been questions that have been problems to Christians who were invited by a friend to a meal, but the dinner was going to be held in a temple and the meat itself might be dedicated to one of the false gods. So that maybe explained some of the things that are found in these particular chapters. That, evidently, would be something like the situation that is suggested in chapter 8, verse 7 and following.

Now, in the case of a dinner given at home, then the host would have the carcass that he had bought or the part of the meat of the carcass that he had bought, and he would bring it home from the butcher's market. One of the commentators has suggested that the carcass brought back from the temple, or the particular piece of meat that he purchased might be something that, was not a whole lot of good so far as the meat was concerned, but at least it made it possible for them to dedicate the supper to the particular god. They might bring back only a part of the animal that was actually uneatable. In fact, there are parts in which the hair itself was all that was there, but that would be brought, and thanks would be given to the god in heaven, and then they would eat the other part of the meat that had been brought. So that, evidently, lies in the background here of the sacral feasts. And the Christians were faced with many problems as a result of it.

Now, we should say this, too, that these were real religious celebrations. They were deliberate acts of worship that were carried out. It was not something that was just play. They really were trying to do that. It might seem surprising to us that enlightened Christians, that is those who understood the difference between a strong and a weak Christian with reference to meat sacrificed to idols, they themselves were tempted to join such festivities. And so we can only suppose that they thought themselves fairly safe to

attend them because they frequently were civic celebrations in which the whole city took part, and they would be likely to be expected to be there for one reason or another.

You can also understand how they might be attracted to this because the ceremonies associated with the sacral worship were very elaborate ceremonies, and they were very appealing to people who find such ceremony, such liturgy appealing to them. Now, we have evidence of that in the Christian church. We have people in the Christian church who love to attend a church in which there is an impressive liturgy. In fact, that is the major reason some go to particular churches in our society. I'm sure you know that. You realize that people do attend these churches with high liturgy. They attend them largely for the reason that it's impressive to them, and they feel a sense of worship in being in a situation in which there is an impressive liturgy. I guess those of us who have not been brought up in a church like that, we find it very difficult to understand. But if you talk to your friends who have, you realize that those types of ceremonies have tremendous appeal for them.

Now, when you think of the early Christians, many of whom had been in the ceremonies of Judaism, the greatest of all ceremonies, the most impressive of all ceremonies, and the most compelling of all ceremonies because they were divinely given by God, you can see how some of the Jewish Christians might be attracted to the ceremonial, and particularly when they thought about the kind of meetings that the Christians held.

What kind of meetings did the Christians hold? Just like Believers Chapel. That's it. Just like Believer's Chapel. They just came. They observed the Lord's Supper. There was a freedom for gifted men to stand up in the meeting and exhort or teach. There was thanksgiving that was given, prayers, reading of Scripture -- the Scripture that they had. They didn't have a Bible like you and I have a Bible, but they did read Scripture. Some of the parts of the Bible, we are told, the apostle tells us, were to be read, and so they were read.

They didn't need an elaborate temple like the temple to Isis or the temple to Aesculapius -- now that is a very difficult name to pronounce on the spur of the moment - or Osiris or any of the gods, Serapis for example. So where did the Christians meet? They met in somebody's home. So they met in a home, insignificant place, small group of people. All they did was sit, look to the Lord, pray, ministry of the word of God, impromptu, and then take the wine, take the bread. That was the meeting.

That was certainly a letdown for those who were used to very elaborate liturgy. So I can understand how there was a tendency for these people to have problems with it. The bare, unadorned rite of the Christian Lord's Supper celebrated in some unconsecrated room, not dedicated to any god at all except the invisible God in heaven. The prestige, not there. The thrilling ritual of the cult associations, no longer there; but simply honoring the triune God in heaven: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You know, if you put yourself in those situations as much as you can, I think you'll realize some of the problems of the New Testament and the Christians of the New Testament.

Well, Paul now is concluding his counsel of almost three chapters, as I have mentioned. He is going to give us some practical advice to the Christians in Corinth. Essentially, he will tell them that Christian freedom is broad and it's full. They can eat anything that they like, but there are possible stumbling blocks that test their Christian love and their Christian concern for their fellow believers who do not understand the fullness of the liberty that they have since they are no longer under the Mosaic law. And further, they are tested so far as their concern for the glory of God is concerned. So the apostle is going to conclude his instructions now.

And, first of all, he is going to talk about some basic principles in verse 23 and verse 24. He repeats something he said in chapter 6, verse 12 in the first line of verse 23 because he says, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful." Now, he said that in chapter 6, verse 12 precisely the same thing, so he's repeating himself here. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me,

but not all things edify.” When we talk about the atonement in the New Testament we have to answer questions like what does the term “world” mean. And we try to show that the term “world” has more than one meaning. It’s not always everyone without exception. It often is everyone without distinction. The term “all” has different meanings, also. The term “any” has also different meanings. One must observe the context carefully. It is often not done. And so frequently people would just say that says “world,” that means everybody without exception, but “world” doesn’t always mean everybody without exception. In the New Testament, it often means everyone without distinction; that is, Jews and Gentiles.

Now, here the apostle says, “All things are lawful for me.” But all things are not lawful for the Apostle Paul. Why do I say that? Why he’s already told us some things that are not lawful in this very epistle. We turn back, for example, to say -- well, let’s say chapter 10, the very chapter we are in, and we look at verse 7 through verse 9, “Do not become,” well, verse 6, “Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.” Is it okay to lust after evil things? No, he’s just told us no. “And do not become idolaters as were some of them.” Is it okay then to worship the idols? No. “Nor let us commit sexual immorality.” Chapter 6 here, he’s already said, flee fornication. That’s not lawful. Right here in this very chapter. “Let us not tempt Christ.” Is that lawful? No, it’s not lawful.

Now, how is it then that the apostle can say now all these things happen to them? Well, I’m sorry I’m reading the wrong things there. “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.” It’s obvious “all” doesn’t mean always all things. In other words, here he’s talking about specific “all things” that are defined by the context. It’s not surprising people have difficulty with the Bible because they really don’t realize why one must learn some simple principles of interpretation in order to understand it. They don’t get it. And, unfortunately, it leads to a lot of confusion. So the apostle says, “All things are lawful for me.”

But he doesn’t mean all things. He means all things are lawful with respect to eating the various kinds of food that ultimately come from God in heaven. That’s what he means. All kinds of food. I can eat all kinds of food, for example. All things are lawful for me. But even then not all things are helpful. In other words, one may freely eat certain things, but sometimes our free eating of certain things may offend our brethren or our sisters in the church of Christ who have scruples regarding those things. In that case, while, “All things are lawful, all things are not helpful.” He continues, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.” Strictly speaking, when a person is interested in his Christian life, he is interested in not only what he can do, but he is interested in the effect that it will have on others. So he is interested in things, so far as he is concerned, that will be helpful and that will build up others. And in building up others, it’s necessary for him from time to time not to eat certain things because they may offend fellow Christians who don’t understand yet the relationship of the believer to the Law of Moses, for example.

So it’s one of the basic principles, freedom, but there are limitations. And the limitations the apostle has been from time to time talking about. He thinks this is very important because he brings up the same subject in the Epistle to the Romans. Those of you that have studied Romans, I’m sure you probably remember chapter 14 which has to do with these indifferent things, that is, they can be eaten or they cannot be eaten depending on the circumstances. But in chapter 14, verse 20 of Romans he wrote, “Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.” So if I know that my doing something is going to offend my fellow Christian, I must not do it.

Now, there’s a practical way in which this applies to us. We mentioned this in one of the preceding messages, but not all of you were there, and I’ll mention it again, the question of Christians drinking a glass of wine at a meal. In my opinion, the Bible does not say anything contrary to that. The Bible speaks very strongly about

drunkenness, but a glass of wine at a meal, so far as I know, the Bible doesn’t say anything against it. But if, since we know among evangelical Christians there are many who have strong scruples about this, then it’s not right for us to have a glass of wine when we know we are going to offend our fellow Christians. That’s what Paul is talking about, “All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient, helpful. All things are lawful, but all do not edify.” And so the apostle had the same issue before him, but it was meat sacrificed to idols for him.

So there are limitations to our freedom. And the 24th verse, another of the specific applications, makes the point that other’s interests are to be supreme for us. In other words, the man who wants to drink a glass of wine should remember that it’s not his freedom that is preeminent, it’s the scruple that the fellow believer has and the effect that you may have upon him because you may be cause for his sin. How is that? Well, he may see you take the glass of wine, and though he feels himself it’s wrong, but since you’ve done it, he does it. You have done it and have not sinned. You know that the Bible does not say anything against that, since the law has been done away with since we are living in New Testament times, but he doesn’t know that. And so he sins against his conscience, whereas you do not. In other words, two people can do the same thing and for one it is a sin, and for the other it is not. This is what Paul is suggesting all through this section and also in Romans chapter 14. So the application is in matters like this.

But now he adds another thing in verse 24, “Let no one seek his own, but each one seek the other’s well-being.” So if there is a question, seek your fellow believer’s well-being. That’s the important thing. The glass of wine, my fellow believer’s well-being is far more significant than that. So his well-being is the important thing.

The Authorized Version has an interesting reading here. How many of you have the Authorized Version, I wonder? Oh, quite a few of you have the Authorized Version there. Let me point out how it reads, maybe you haven’t even looked at it. “Let no man seek his own, but every other man’s wealth.” Now, wait a minute. The United States of

America is fulfilling Scripture. [Laughter] “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.” That’s what we’re doing, isn’t it? If I can just get his wealth and keep mine at the same time, that’s the great philosophy of the United States of America. Well, the term of the text should be rendered “well-being” rather than “wealth” because it is clear that’s the point of the context.

So these are the basic principles then. We have freedom, but it’s a conditioned kind of freedom. Ultimately, the interests of others are more important than our interests. That’s very important for Christians to realize. It’s very difficult, too. But, nevertheless, it’s so important for us.

Now, he turns to the specific application of the principles. This is apostolic counseling. If you want to know what New Testament counseling is all about, look in the Bible. This is the apostolic counseling. This is the apostle acting as our Christian counselor, our Christian, I won’t say psychologist because I don’t think that’s what he’s doing, but he is giving us Christian counseling. And what kind of counseling does he give? He turns us to the Bible, to the word of God. That’s Christian counseling par excellence. And so now, he will give us Christian counseling.

And first of all, verse 25 and verse 26 he says, “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience’ sake.” Why? Why, Paul? Why should I eat everything? Well, I want to give you a word of counsel, the apostle says. This is free counseling. You don’t have to pay any psychologist. You don’t have to go pay him twenty-five dollars an hour, fifty dollars an hour, seventy-five dollars an hour, whatever it may be. It’s right here in the Bible.

Notice what he says, “For the earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness.” Psalm 24 verse 1, what we have about us in this particular earth that we are in that is food comes from God; therefore, the apostle says, eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience’ sake. Now, if a person asks questions, it’s obvious that his conscience is not really free. In fact, if he’s going to be asking questions, it’s clear he

does not realize he's free. So don't be a question-asker. That's one of the first lessons. Just don't ask questions. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market. Don't go buy a piece of animal that was sacrificed and say, "Was this sacrificed to an idol?" because that indicates you have a scruple. You really don't believe you can eat everything. So don't ask those questions. If you ask the questions, it shows you are weak.

So Paul says eat whatever is sold in the meat market. It may have been offered to Serapis. It may have been offered to Isis, or Osiris her husband. It might have been offered to Aesculapius -- see I know how to pronounce that word -- Aesculapius or whatever god was being honored there. But don't ask questions, because if they say this was offered to Aesculapius, and they know you're a Christian and then you take it and eat it, ah that tells them a lot about you, as he will go on to say. So that's the information for those who are eating meat that is bought in the marketplace and is brought home to their own house and put on the table.

This is what mom bought and brought home and puts it on the table, so you who are sitting around the table don't say, mom, where did you get this meat? Don't say did you get it down there where the shambles are sold? Right by -- incidentally the meat market was usually right by the temple, because they sacrificed the idols, too the extra meat over to the place, sell it to the man who is selling the meat, and then he will sell it. So don't say, Mom, where did you but this? Was it offered to an idol? Just eat it, Paul says. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market. Don't ask questions for conscience' sake. "For the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness."

Now, verse 27, however, brings us to another question, further counseling. Paul, what should I do when I am invited to a dinner party? It may be a dinner party in the temple, or it may be in someone's home. What about then? Paul says, "If any of those who do not believe invite you to dinner" -- now I want to say a question about this before we go on because it is something I think that is kind of important. You'll notice here that the apostle says, "If any of those who do not believe invite you to dinner."

Now, that is, I think, important because what it tells us is that in the church at Corinth, as I think it should be in all of our Christian society, the believers still maintain contact with the unbelievers. In other words, the statements that the apostle makes in 2 Corinthians in chapter 6 in verse 14, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" Does not in its application mean that the Christians are to have no contact with the non-Christians? It is significant for the Christian church to be a church that is seeking others, to win them to faith in Christ, and therefore, all of us, ought to have non-Christian friends, most likely. Now, there may be some physical reasons for some of us, we shouldn't or may not have. But even then, when your doctor comes to you, he's an opportunity. Because my sense of doctors is they may be a little more spiritual than the average person in the society because they have to deal with a lot of things that others don't have to deal with, but they are often objects of evangelism, too.

So the apostle indicates from this that those early Christians did have friends who invited them to dinner affording them an opportunity for setting forth before them the claims of Christ.

Now, he says if any of those who do not believe invite you to dinner and you desire to go, you wish to go, evidently there are certain occasions when a person might not wish to go. One can imagine that in that society. Eat whatever is set before you, but don't ask any questions, for conscience' sake. In other words, if you want to eat there, you want to go, don't when they bring out the meat for the table and place it before you say, was this offered to Isis? That already lets them know, and it also reveals to all about that you have scruples. Now, scruples in Paul's particular theology are bad because, as a result of the doing away of the Law of Moses and the freedom that Christian's have, we may eat anything. He's just said that, hasn't he? All things are lawful for me. So if I have scruples, it's because I don't believe all things may be eaten by me. So the very fact that I say, Is this offered to an idol, indicates that I don't believe I can eat something offered to

an idol. But I can eat something offered to an idol if I understand, and if as Paul has pointed out from chapter 8 on, there are things that we do that might affect others and their understanding of the gospel. In that case, I must not eat it. But if you are invited, eat whatever is set before you, don’t ask any questions for conscience’ sake. But now, if anyone says to you, this was offered to idols, do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you and for conscience’ sake. Now the Authorized Version has, “For the earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness,” repeated here, probably not genuine. So we’ll just stop with that.

Now, eat whatever is set before you, but now if anyone says to you -- and I want to ask you a question, Who is the “anyone”? If anyone asks you a question. Well, there are some possibilities I could think about. Is it the unbelieving host? If anyone says to you, this was offered for idols. In other words, if the host and hostess were unbelievers and they were to offer of themselves, this was offered to Aesculapius, then the apostle gives instructions. “If they do say that, do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you and for your conscience’ sake.” The reason for that should be very plain because if you go ahead and eat it, that indicates you have a very low view of the oneness of the Christian God, because you are acknowledging, in their eyes, that there is another god. It’s perfectly all right for you to eat something that’s offered to Aesculapius. So that’s a possibility.

Now, it could be of course a non-Christian guest who makes this statement. If anyone says to you, you know, like this, This is offered to Aesculapius. Now, he might do that with a bit of what the Germans call *schadenfreude*. Now, *schadenfreude* is the joy that one feels as the result of someone else’s misfortune. Why do people laugh at cartoons that show people slipping on banana peels? Can you help that? You see somebody come out on a cartoon and a banana peel and suddenly they fall and everybody laughs. That’s *schadenfreude*. That’s the joy that we feel as a result of someone else’s misfortune. It’s very hard to know exactly the source of that, except that

it has to do with our sin nature, no doubt. One of the peculiar defining characteristics of the human race seems to be related to this strange and sometimes sadistic sense of humor someone has said, the joy of laughter evoked by witnessing somebody else's pain or bad luck. It's one of these traits that set us apart from animals. They never -- they never laugh at the misfortune of another animal, so far as we know. So they don't practice *schadenfreude*. Maybe they don't know German. I don't know. But anyway, they don't practice it. This trait is found among Americans. It's found among Brazilians. It's found among Manhattanites. It's found among Hottentots. It isn't even confined to adults. And the place where I got this little bit of information adds this sentence that is so true, any clown could tell you that the pratfall is the royal road to a toddler's funny bone.

Now, I want to tell you an experience of mine. I'm enjoying doing this so much, I don't know that I am going to finish tonight, but I don't care tonight. Everything is lawful tonight. [Laughter] There is a place, there is a place that I go to have supper every now and then when I want a waffle. And it's over on 75. It's Cindy's. And I do go over there -- oh I don't know, we go over maybe once every six weeks, four to six weeks, something like that. And I almost always go in and order a waffle and two scrambled eggs, soft scrambled, with bacon. But the waffle is the main thing.

And so I went in there one time. And we have a waitress who usually waits on us, and she is a very nice person. She's funny. Well, I went in one time, and she brought the waffle out and over here are the eggs and the bacon, and so I took the maple syrup, and I poured it all over it like this, after putting butter on it. And then, I don't know how it happened, but I took out my knife and fork and started to eat it and suddenly the waffle came this way into my lap with the syrup, everything in my lap. Now, that happened years ago. How many, Martha? Four or five years ago. She says two. It's more than that because I know from the pain I've suffered it's more than two years [laughter]. But every time I go in Cindy's and that waitress is there, she loves to remind me of what happened. She has a bad case of *schadenfreude*. [Laughter] She reminds me

every time, Do you want a waffle on the plate or in the lap? [Laughter] You know, all kinds of things like that.

Well, you know, I can just imagine at this meal they are sitting around the table and the meat is brought in, and there is by my side a friend of mine, but he's not a Christian. I've talked to him. And as I get ready to eat the meat, maybe he waits until I've already eaten. The first bite tastes like one of those steaks at Del Frisco. I've been there one time. And after I have the one bite in my mouth and enjoyment, he says, "By the way, this was offered to Isis." [Laughter] And then he laughs at me. I can just imagine all kinds of things happening as a result of this.

So in that case, we read the apostle says, "If anyone says to you this was offered to idols, do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you." Because I have to give him a message. I really am a believer in Jesus Christ, and I want to make it very plain that I do not believe in other gods, that there is only one God, and so I put aside the meat and do not eat it anymore. It's possible.

You know, one thing about our Lord Jesus Christ -- you can read this in the gospels -- that people were very careful to watch him, just like nonbelievers are often careful to watch you. They want to see how you behave in the situations where your faith may be at stake. And so we read in Luke chapter 14 in verse 1, "Now it happened, as he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched him closely," watched him closely. So Paul says, don't eat it if they say it's offered to one of the false gods.

I rather think however, that this particular information, if anyone says to you this was offered to idols is probably made by a weak believer who has scruples. And he's probably even gone in the kitchen to find out from the hostess, where was this meat bought? He may have asked the question, incidentally, didn't want to embarrass her and perhaps didn't want to let her know that he had all these scruple but just quietly said, why that's a lovely cut there, where did you get that? Well, I got that from the meat

market down by the temple. It was offered to Aesculapius yesterday. So it's fresh. Well, you can see all kinds of questions that might arise. A person goes to the meat market, buys a piece of meat. He asks about it, asks the person behind the counter about it, and the person says, Well, this was just slain two days ago. It's rather fresh. It was slain in the services with Isis. And then if the Christian goes ahead and buys it, then after we've gone, the butcher says to one of the other people there, "That's very interesting because that fellow's been a Christian. He's been trying to win me to his faith, and he talks about believing in one God but evidently he has a place for Aesculapius and his theology. And so when it comes to meat, he's not a monotheist after all." So, non-Christians do watch us. And so Paul says, "Don't eat it, for the sake of the one who told you and for conscience' sake," his conscience.

Now, he says conscience, I say not your own, but that of the other. "For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience." It's rather difficult, this section here, and I don't have time to go into it, but probably verse 28 through the first part of verse 29 is parenthetical and this statement goes back to verse 27, "Eat whatever is set before you asking no questions for conscience' sake, for why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience." That makes very good sense and probably that's the way we are to take it.

Now, then the apostle sums it up in verse 31 through verse 33. He says, "Therefore" -- Now, this draws the inferences from the preceding. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." This, in my opinion, is very, very significant. The apostle says, In the final analysis, this great theological principle is to govern your actions and attitudes in matters like this. It is the glory of God that should be our guide. Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.

Now, that has a very practical application for us. I'm tempted to read the application that H.A. Ironside has in his book because I think it's so true. This is what he says -- maybe I've got time to read it. He says, "That takes in my entire life. A great

many people try to live their lives in sealed compartments. There's one compartment for the church, there's another for the family, there's another for business, and another for pleasure and recreation. And the same man may seem to be an altogether different person in each one of these. When he comes to church, he is the essence of sanctimoniousness. He has a long face and a reverent mean, and as he sits in his pew, you would not think an unholy thought ever passed through his mind. His eyes are either uplifted to heaven or closed as if enwrapped in meditation.

But see that same man during the week when he goes out into the world in business, now his eyes are never closed. They are never lifted heavenly. He's looking about him furtively in a most anxious way, and he always is as interested in how you may make a dollar honestly or dishonestly. In fact, he sometimes does not make the dollars at all. He simply gets them. There's a great deal of difference between making money and getting money. We make money when we give a legitimate return for it. We get money without giving a legitimate return for it. And even professing Christians often engage in various nefarious schemes that wouldn't bear the test of the word of God nor even a close application of the law of the land in their efforts to get money. When they are questioned they say, Well, you know what the Bible says, not slothful in business. That's a Scripture that has made a great impression upon many minds.

And then again, this same man goes to his home, and there he is an altogether different person. In business he's so affable, at church so reverent, so solemn, but in his home where he feels he is best known, he is sometimes anything but affable and solemn. He shows a miserably bad temper and is a kind of boar and makes everybody around the house uncomfortable. You've probably heard the story of the wife who said of her husband who was a preacher, when I see him in the pulpit, I think he never ought to come out of it; when I see his behavior at home I think he ought never to go into it. There are people just like that. I think it's important for us to remember that whatever we do, it's to be done to the glory of God.

Now, we may not be watched like our Lord Jesus Christ because we are not as important as he was in his society, in his person, in his work, but they do watch us as Christians. Now, that's not the reason primarily we should be doing that which is right. The reason primarily we should be doing what is right is it's for the glory of God. And we should not live our lives in compartments. What we are in the church, we ought to be at home. What we are at home should not be contrary to what we put on when we come to church. All of our life is a life that is lived for God wherever we are, whatever we are doing at whatever time, it should be done for the glory of God. We all know that. And we should ask the Lord to give us the grace to live up to the knowledge that we have.

Then he says give no offense either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God. This is the secondary goal. Don't give offense. Don't be a stumbling block to the Jews, to the Greeks, or to the church of God. In other words, the good of others, whether Jews, Gentiles, or the church of God, is to be our guide. In one sense, of course, offense is justified if we are offending for the sake of the gospel. But Paul is not talking about that. In fact, he himself says in Galatians chapter 5, if he were not preaching the gospel, why is he suffering the things that he is suffering because of the circumcision issue. Paul is not talking about that here. He is talking about something else. But don't give stumbling blocks to Jews, to Gentiles, or the church of God.

We live today in the rising tide of anti-Semitism. I cannot help but feel that there is a rising tide of it. We have Louis Farrakhan, for example, and the things that he says. He reflects, of course, what many others believe. We have many who in the course of our Gentile lives find ourselves saying things about the Jewish people that are not justified. Some things are justified, like the things we say about Gentiles. But anti-Semitism is really fundamentally a sin that Scripture specifically regards as extremely heinous. What it is ultimately, in my opinion, is our protest against the sovereign grace of God that elected Israel, because that's really what's involved in all of this. God has elected Israel, and we don't like it. And when we look at the Holy Land today or

Palestine or Israel now, we can see that Ishmael and Isaac are still fighting, still fighting. The Bible is the most current of all the books. There it is right there today.

And then we have in Russia now, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, some of the things that he has said, I put down a thing or two from the present issue of *Time* magazine, but you've seen him in the newspapers. He has been saying some things that are extremely evil with reference to Israel: "We must deal with ethnic minorities as America did with the Indians and Germany did with the Jews." He is rumored, incidentally, to have a Jewish father, and so he's been trying to avoid that fact by trying to refute it. So far he hasn't been able to do it. Don't give offense to the Jews. One of the greatest privileges that you could possibly have would be the means, being the means by which a Jewish person comes to faith in their and our Messiah. And ultimately, Jewish people are very much like you and me. They're sinners. And many of them are just ordinary people. And they should really be upon our hearts. The gospel went out to the Jew first, also to the Greek. There's no reason why we should not preach the gospel to them. And one of the ways we do that is by what we say and what we do.

And finally Paul appeals to his own example. He says, "Just as I also please all men in all things." Wait a minute, Paul, "please all men"? That isn't what you said. What did you say, "please all men"? Let me read one of your words, Paul, which you wrote. "For do I now persuade men our God or do I seek to please men, or do I seek to please men? for if I still pleased men I would not be a bond servant of Christ." See how easy it is for us to take one sentence and place it against another, not paying attention to the different contexts?

In Galatians chapter 1 he's saying I don't please men, in that I don't trim the truth in order to please them. But here he refuses to follow the attitudes and practices that might hinder the truth. And so in one sense he doesn't please men. He preaches the word of God. In the other case, he doesn't please men -- or he pleases all men because he's practicing principles that are true to the word of God.

So he says -- I better get back to my text that I'm trying to expound. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, he says, "Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved." This is what he talked about in chapter 9, the things that governed him as he sought to preach the gospel, "that they might be saved." And then he says, "Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ," imitate the man who sought to imitate the Lord. We imitate Paul, but he was imitating our Lord.

I'd like to close with something that I wrote over thirty years ago on this chapter, and I think it is still apropos. I was surprised that my words had such long-standing significance, written thirty years ago and I would say them today. I really had forgotten about them. This is what I said, "This climactically concludes the discussion, the correct attitude in the matter then is liberty, the liberty of love for the Lord, for the truth, and for one's brother. Neither legality nor license will do; conditioned liberty is the principle to follow." That's what Paul means when he says, "All things are lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of any." May the Lord help us as believing Christians to live according to the application of these principles in our society today, nineteen hundred years later. Let's bow in a closing word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God. We thank Thee for the practicality of it and the richness of it, and we especially thank Thee for the way in which it points us so unfailingly to our Lord Jesus Christ as the one who has loved us and given himself for us. And we pray that we may be able to follow the apostle's exhortations to live our lives according to the will of God for the glory of God, that we may also imitate the apostle as he imitated our Lord, that we might be the means of the conversion of others that they might be saved and enjoy what we enjoy.

And we pray, Lord, particularly that thou wilt bless this church, this assembly, its leadership, and may this church be the kind of tool that will honor our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the word that Thou hast given to us.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

“Liberty, Charity and the Glory of God” by S. Lewis Johnson
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