

1Corinthians 18-07-15b

Let's continue our study now. We are in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and we are looking at this section verses 14 through 20. So what we've looked at so far, the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to demons.

The issue is not the food on the table. The issue is the context in which it is shared. It is the sharing that is in view.

That is the spiritual reality. Paul says, am I saying that the food is anything or that the idol is anything? No. But you are establishing koinonia in a demonic context instead of in a blood of Christ, body of Christ context.

You are sharing. You are making yourself a part of something in the spiritual realm that is dangerous and unhealthy and disrespects the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus. You are compromising yourself.

You are splitting your identity and trying to be all things to all people, not as Paul did it, but for your own purposes. So we pick up here in verse 21, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Now, a question for you. Let's assume for the moment that we were going to color code this as the actual table, the actual meal stuff. Can you partake of the Lord's table and can you go up the hill to the temple and partake of the idol meal? Can you do that? I can.

I can eat a cracker and drink a cup here. Then I can go to the temple of Satan somewhere and eat a cracker and drink a cup up there. I can do that with no trouble whatsoever.

In fact, that is the problem in Corinth. My brother Matthew helpfully pointed out on the break, if you heard the review from Peter on Thursday night, Peter was writing to the diaspora, to those Jews who had been blasted out of their homeland and their culture and their identity. They were the point of spear.

They were thrust into the bowels of the Roman Empire with all of its depraved sensuality and its heinous dedication to promiscuity and all kinds of things that I remember at the time and I still can't even describe some of the things that they took for granted as normal. And so the Jews were in culture shock and in moral shock that they were surrounded by this and especially having to try to raise children. You can't keep them in a germ-free bubble.

Are they going to be infected? Are they going to be led astray? And of course some of them were and it was a real challenge in the church. What do you do with your youth group? How do you keep them together? How do you keep them from being seduced by the enticements of the world when they are so ubiquitous and so taken for granted as normal? And oddly enough we have that situation today. This situation as Matthew mentioned is a little different because he's

talking largely to the Corinthian Gentiles who already take all of these things for granted and instead of how do you maintain your identity and your dedication to God and your morality and your separateness and your holiness as a Jewish Christian, how do you draw people who have always done this kind of stuff into a higher standard of separation and dedication and recognizing that what used to be okay when I was a partying, godless, shameless Gentile is not okay now that I partake of the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were cleansed, you were entered into Christ. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation. Old things are passed away, all things are become new.

You've got to see the difference. You've got to offload the old baggage and dedicate yourself to what you now are and recognize the benefits and the blessing, the cup of blessing that we share as ransomed, delivered, forward looking, future anticipating believers, we're on a whole different plane. You don't go back to the old vomit.

You don't decide, well I really am just a sow's ear after all and God has not transformed me into silk. I'm just a pretender. I'm going to go back to my comfortable ways.

We are different. We are changed. We are transformed.

We have been regenerated. We're different people. Well Paul's got to try to get this across to Corinthians who have grown up with all of this being perfectly acceptable.

It's easy for some of us that have seen a lot of technological change in our lives to remember the days when it was just a black and white TV with three channels not swarming entertainment of every shape, size and description from multiple venues. You can get it off a digital broadcast and there's dozens of channels. Just stick an antenna in the air, attach a wire to your fillings if your fillings are as old as mine and you can pick up all kinds of high definition channels.

I've sort of longed for the days where we had three stations and the educational TV. Here in the Tulsa area it was 268 and then channel 11 was educational and that was it. There was nothing.

There was a couple of outpost contraband UHF stations, channel 23 I think. They were kind of like, wow, what kind of a weird channel is that? You've got your three networks and you've got your nuts that are doing all this public television and constantly dinging you for money. That hasn't changed.

Now it just comes in and you try to explain to a child that's grown up with a tablet or a phone in the crib, if they even still use cribs. Now you see people walk around with them strapped on like papoose and they've got these state of the art, jet age child management contraptions. You try to explain to somebody, there was a day and of course the generation before us was trying to say, television, what are you talking about? We burn kerosene and we're lucky to get an AM radio station or two.

The people before that, are you kidding me? Gasoline engines, horse and buggy. Lucky to live in a town that had gas lights and the old lamp lighter, going around lighting lamps and snuffing them out. People now say, lamp lighter, what are you talking about? Light a lamp, what is it, LED or gas argon, what are you talking about? Well, the Corinthians have to be instructed and Paul spent over two years there explaining to them the difference and he's chiding them now and saying, have you so soon forgotten? He doesn't have to tell them the story of the Exodus, he's already taught it to them.

He's just giving them a reminder and saying, remember the type? We've talked about this people, I'm talking to you as though you're wise enough to remember what I inculcated on an almost daily basis for nearly three years. But you can't share, he says in verse 21, you can't drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. It doesn't mean you can't physically pick one up and then pick the other one up and drink from them.

We're still in the spiritual realm. This is spiritual drink, spiritual cup. The cup of demons, it's not like, well you know, the demon's in the bottle, it's demon rum, I pour it into a glass and now you've got demon in a cup.

Drink that and the demon's inside you. It represents something. I know I'm harping on this but trust me, it's kind of like the Corinthians, they were so used to hearing one way of thinking that when it came time to get invited up the hill to the idol temple, they couldn't see why not.

Well, we've been inured and we've been bathed in some traditional understanding, especially in the next chapter, and it really takes some emphasis to break free and look at these truths with fresh eyes. This is spiritual, it is the spiritual cup of the Lord. What is the cup? It's not the thing sitting on the table with liquid inside, it is the fellowship, it is the covenant.

Jesus said this symbolic cup here that we are all sharing, this is an agreement, it's a new covenant in my blood. His blood wasn't in the cup, the covenant wasn't in the cup, but he said as we, in the same way that you drink this cup, I'm telling you this is your fellowship, this is your shared identity in the covenant. It's a new covenant and you're the first members.

Those eleven guys, and actually by the way there were twelve, this is why I believe, of course this is totally off the subject, but I think Judas is going to be in the resurrection. Judas is going to be there and he's going to have his own separate opportunity to catch up on being a teaching disciple for about a thousand years saying don't make the mistake I made. Why do I think that? Because when Jesus took off his shirt, girded his waist and washed the disciples feet, Judas was in the room and the Lord Jesus washed his feet.

He didn't say, well Judas, sorry I can't wash your feet, you need a bath. He had the opposite discussion with Peter. Remember Peter says, well Lord, you know, Jesus says if I don't wash your feet you have no part with me.

Peter says, well then wash me all over. Jesus said, you don't understand, this is maintenance,

this is dirty feet, this isn't regeneration where you need to be cleansed all over. And he says, as I have done for you, you should do for each other.

I am forgiving you your operating sins. You should forgive each other operating sins. Transgressions that are not relationship deal breaking sins, it's road dirt.

As I have done for you, you do for one another. And Jesus washed Judas' feet, didn't give him a bath. So if Jesus washed his feet and made no distinction, then he's just like all the other disciples in terms of what he needs and he is included in the command that says as I have done for you, you should do for one another.

Judas is also present, if you look at the accounts carefully, he is there at the table when Jesus says, this cup is the new covenant of my blood, this bread is my body broken for you, take, eat. He's there. He gets up afterward.

They're still eating, dipping hands in the dish, the one who's going to betray me. He gets up, leaves, what you do, do quickly. He goes out and it was night.

But the idea is that this physical partaking is suggestive of, symbolic of, representative of a bond, a unity, an acceptance, a fellowship. And it is instructive that despite the opportunity and despite the inclusion in that fellowship and in that cleansing and in that declaration of covenant and memorial on the part of the Lord Jesus, Judas gets up and voluntarily leaves. He gets up and leaves.

This is what Paul is wanting the Corinthians to do in reverse. If you find yourself sitting at the table where the fellowship and the cup and the bread are all representative of, suggestive of, symbolic of, fellowship with demons, you need to get up and leave. You need to not be a part of that.

Judas excuses himself for the fellowship of the body and the blood of the Lord and goes out and dedicates himself to some other goal. In reverse, this is what the Corinthians should do. Leave that table and maintain, because you can't do both.

Judas can't stay at the table and betray the Lord. He's got to leave the table and leave the upper room and leave the fellowship of the disciples and leave the presence and power of the Lord Jesus and go betray Him and take up with the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees and the Roman soldiers who are at their behest. The temple guard is going to be sent.

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot fill your mind with some of the stuff that is floating around in the world today, acceptance of evil, toleration of things that are labeled as abominations in the Word of God. You can't do that and maintain your koinonia in the body and the blood of the Lord.

They are mutually exclusive in the spiritual realm. You can physically take up anything you want. I think I mentioned that I just saw a documentary, it's like 40 years later, after the

Jonestown thing in Guyana.

They went through point by point that whole episode. Can you pick up a cup of poison and drink it, either voluntarily or because somebody is standing there saying drink it or else? Sure. Physically you can do that.

Spiritually you're either on one side or the other. There were people who left ahead of that. They saw that this guy was a fruitcake and they saw that it was heading toward disaster and they left.

There are plenty of former Jonestown occupants who didn't die. Many of them are still alive today. They talked about the atmosphere and the coercion and the virtual hypnotism and in some cases the coercion to stay that led to the death of, I think, counting the people who were shot at the airport.

I'd forgotten that part. The people from that cult went and shot a congressman and three reporters from NBC. I think it was a total of five people.

It was a couple of survivors but several were shot and killed at the airport by these people before the Kool-Aid incident. But you can't share spiritually. You've got to declare yourself.

I am either in with the people of God and I am dedicated to the things of Christ or I am going to be in this world and I am going to imbibe the entertainment and the enticement and the allure and the stimulation and the fun of being one of the folks. It's my online chat group. It's my circle of acquaintances.

It's my fellow students. It's my fellow co-workers. We get together and I don't make an issue out of this biblical morality or Jesus stuff.

I just keep a low profile and don't make waves. I'm accepted. I'm one of the group.

I'm one of the bunch. Paul says you cannot do that. You betray the body of the Lord Jesus of which you are a member.

The Lord Jesus isn't here. We are. His mission was to do the will of the Father, to communicate the truth.

So, Paul says you cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons. Partaking at the table is a figure for fellowship, association, acceptance, mutual enthusiasm for a thing. He's not saying that you physically can't eat a piece of bread at church on Sunday and then go Tuesday to the one-year-old daughter's party at the Temple of Artemis and not eat some food up there.

Of course you can do that. But spiritually speaking, you cannot have both koinonias. They are mutually exclusive.

You cannot be filled with the Spirit and drunk with wine wherein is excess. You cannot do both

at the same time. You are either under the influence of the Spirit or you are under the influence of spirits.

You can't do both. You cannot yield yourself to the influence and the effect of something other than the Holy Spirit if you are dedicated to being under the influence and enablement of God's Holy Spirit. You cannot do both.

Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? We've got a strength. We have a plan. We have a purpose.

We have an outcome. Remember the concept of outcome earlier in verse 13? The challenge comes with an outcome that God makes. God manufactures an outcome for durability and perseverance and faithfulness under challenge.

What kind of outcome? If you throw that away and you're not interested in God's purpose and God's plan and God's strength, do you think you've got a better plan? Do you know more than He does about your future provision, your prosperity, your acceptance, your well-being? Are you stronger than He is? Do you seriously think you've got a better idea? Satan does. A lot of believers think that the Bible is outdated and that some of its principles and some of its exclusions and some of its condemnations are no longer valid. I've got a better grip on this than God does.

It's okay to be ecumenical. It's okay to be accepting of lifestyles that reflect perversion and direct contradiction of stated principles of Scripture in terms of morality. I'm stronger than God is what you're saying.

I'm wiser. This is going to produce a greater good than what God can manufacture if I adhere to His standards. I can make a better good.

Well, why don't you just say the five I wills and join the rebellion? Let the dragon's tail sweep you out of heaven too. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Remember the litany of what happened to the Israelites when they were disobedient? It's the same God. He is just as interested in our positive participation in His plan and not serving as negative examples being strewed in the wilderness.

Those people thought they had a better idea. They thought they were stronger than God. I'll make a God.

He's the one that brought us out of Egypt. I will complain when things don't go the way I think they ought to go. You can be destroyed by the destroyer.

Well, this brings us to verse 23. All things are lawful for me. Technically, I can go up and eat any food they set on the table at the idolatrous temple.

There's no prohibition against eating that particular food even if it's pork, even if it's shellfish,

even if it's things that were formerly prohibited under the law. We're not under law. We're under grace.

All things are now lawful. Remember when Paul was talking about when he's all things to all people in verse 21 of chapter 9? To those who are without the law, I act as though I'm without the law, but not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ. Under law toward Christ.

It's a spiritual discernment to discern the better things. Same thing here. All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.

It is not helpful to blur the distinction between the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning work on the cross, God's saving grace, and what goes on at the pagan temple. It is not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but not all things build up.

Remember they used to say, well, some of us remember, that Wonder Bread builds strong bodies 12 ways. I don't ever remember seeing a list of the 12 ways. Now, I think you can destroy your body in 12 ways.

You've got your glutens, and your starches, and your oils that they put in it, and all of that stuff is bad for you. Wonder Bread is starting to be one of the worst things you can eat. But all things are lawful.

Not all things build up. Edify means to construct. They're not constructive.

Now, to be helpful and to edify goes back to the outcome. If you endure in the challenge, the outcome that God makes is this. It is helpful and it builds up.

There is a reason that we endure challenge. There is a reason that we persevere and don't do certain things that are seemingly open doors, and an easy fix, and a quick solution, and from human eyes they look like a great idea. How do we discern the difference? Look at verse 24.

Let no one seek his own, but each one the others. And this goes back to edification. It says well-being in italics there, but the helpfulness and the edification, we should not be seeking help for ourselves or building up for ourselves in some way, some material way or some advantage way.

We shouldn't be looking for advantage to ourselves. We shouldn't be looking to help ourselves out of a difficulty. Let no one seek his own, and it goes back to helpfulness and edification.

You don't seek your own, but that of others. Which others? Let no one seek his own, but each one the others. Well, we need some context here.

Is it other believers? Is it the others that are up in the demon temple? Is it going to be to their well-being or edification? Look at verse 25. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience sake. Now, this is a bit of discrimination here.

He has been talking about meals at the temple, association and fellowship at the temple, these community get-togethers that are always leading to debauchery and celebration of the pagan deities and so on. Now, he says, I'm not saying that you've got to run so far from idolatry that you won't buy something down at the store that may have originally been up there in the building at some point, but now it's not in the building. It's not in the temple.

It's not on the table. You don't have to go there and sit down and eat and drink with demon-worshipping pagans. If it's in the marketplace and it looks like every other piece of meat, it looks like every other vegetable, it looks like every other piece of fruit or every other piece of bread, and it doesn't have an identity and doesn't require the koinonia to partake, that's why he says, eat whatever.

And people have gotten whipsawed by this passage in the past because they didn't discriminate between idolatrous temple meal sharing versus food that has been up there and maybe was ritually offered and then brought down. It's kind of like the bread that they would put in the holy place and then bring it out and then the priest could eat it. And you know, David ate some.

They changed out the bread and while this had been holy bread, it's not holy bread now because it's outside and it was God's bread for however long and now it's been changed out. Well, this is food that might have sat up there and laid in front of an image for a few hours, then they swapped it out. They put in fresh and they took it down to the market and said, hey, this is no longer sanctified to the pagan deity.

So eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for your conscience sake. This reminds me of all the questions we now ask. Well, are these eggs cage free? Is this a free range chicken? Did this cow live in a beautiful five acre pasture wandering around swatting its own horse flies in that or was it in some kind of a CAFO? Was it in a condensed animal feeding operation where it was standing knee deep in muck and never saw a green blade of grass and was force fed and put in a stall and fattened up and injected with all kinds of chemicals? You know, if you want to, you can ask questions for conscience sake today.

Where did this food come from? Is this genetically modified? Is it got eighteen times the gluten that the bread and flour used to have? You can ask those questions. That's for health sake. For conscience sake, I don't like participating in cruelty to animals and sponsoring those who make their profit by torturing animals to get as many as possible, you know, these little deformed chickens laying eggs and their feet never touch the ground.

I'm not for that. And I will ask questions for conscience sake, but I'm not talking about stuff that, these chicken farmers and beef operators are not demon worshippers. I'm concerned about the animals at that point, right? And I think it's fair to ask questions for conscience sake.

Here, you're not implicating yourself in demon worship if you buy a piece of meat that at some previous time in its life was in a suspicious location. The earth is the Lord's in all its fullness. If any of those who do not believe invites you and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before

you, asking no question for conscience sake at their house.

You've got somebody that said, we're not going up there. This is not a part of worship. This is not on the turf of the demons and the idols.

There's not priests and debauchery and fornication and all kinds of heinous practices going on. And your neighbor, two doors down says, Hey, you want to come over and have some supper? And you say, why sure. And you and your wife, maybe a couple of kids, you go over and meet with them and their wife and their couple of kids.

They put some meat on the table. You don't say, now, where'd you get this meat? Did this come from the idol temple? Did you get this at the marketplace? Don't make an issue out of it because that fellowship is not demon associated. It's about the fellowship.

Hear me now. Eyes up here. It's about the fellowship.

This bread and cup thing is the fellowship of believers versus fellowship with active idol worshiping people at the temple. Maybe whoever invited you over, maybe they are an idol worshiper, but their meal in their house is not an idol worshiping meal. You are not symbolically associating yourself in a koinonia with demons.

And this friendship and this discussion may in fact be a way that you can shine the light of the truth of the Lord Jesus. The venue makes a difference. If anyone of those who do not believe invites you to have a meal and you desire to go, eat whatever, and if you desire to go, you see that there might be a positive outcome.

Maybe these people seem to be questioning or seeking. Maybe they've expressed to you that they're tired of the whole idolatrous thing and there ought to be something more. And they don't like the debauchery that goes on down there.

They look to you and you look like you've got a lifestyle that shines a light to them and they're following that light. Well, don't fail to go because there might be something on the table that has a questionable origin. Ask no questions for conscience sake.

If you desire is going to be, this could be helpful to them. Because what did he just say? You're not seeking your own. You're not going because, well, this is a client and his business would really give me a lot of income.

What did 24 say? Context, context, context. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's helpfulness and edification. And so now, who are the others? It's anybody.

It can be those who do not believe. You can look out for their well-being. You can look out for their helpfulness.

You can look out for their up-building. How would anybody get evangelized if you eschew all contact with somebody that's doing something that's not biblical? If you desire to go, eat

whatever's set before you. Asking no questions for conscience sake.

Notice the repetition in verse 25 and in verse 27. Asking no questions. You're not making an issue out of it yourself.

But verse 28, if anyone says to you, this was offered to idols, now somebody has raised a flag. Somebody has turned on neon lights and this is more by way of a, this is like a question. What are you going to do? This meat was offered to idols.

I want to know, are you with us or are you not? And so now it's been made a litmus test. It's sort of a bar you have to pass or that you have to leap. If anyone says to you, this was offered to idols, do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you.

If they're making an issue, they want to know if you're cool with idol worship represented by this piece of food, you say, well, sorry, no. If you put it that way, I'll pass. Not for your sake.

What did he say in 24? No one's seeking his own, the other's well-being. If someone is asking you a question about this food, it is in their interest that you answer and say, I'm not going to eat it. If you're going to tell me that this is idol food, isn't it interesting? It doesn't actually matter if the food was idolatrous or not.

You ask no questions and you don't even know necessarily. But if somebody makes an issue out of it, now you're going to make an issue of separation. If they make an issue, it is in their interest.

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, you see that phrase there, but that's not in the old. That's confusing.

Ask no questions for conscience sake. But adding for conscience sake here, it would be a lot easier for somebody to add that in than to take it out. And I'm going to suggest that you line out that and for conscience sake.

It's got the text note on it. The older and better texts don't include that. Somebody was just trying to be helpful.

That, well, it's not enough to do it for the other guy's sake. You should do it for your own conscience as well. No, you don't have to ask questions for conscience sake if it's offered or not.

So Paul would be contradicting himself to say that. Some monk somewhere thought that was going to be a helpful note for himself. The earth is the Lord and all its fullness.

And notice he quotes the verse again. Verse 26 and the last part of verse 28. The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness.

Why does he repeat that? Why does he repeat ask no questions for conscience sake twice? And

why does he give the justification twice? Because your view is God is the ultimate source of this. My fellowship in eating this food is with the creator God who made it. The fact that somebody waved it around in front of some oddly shaped stone or image doesn't concern me.

God made it and it's good. You know, as I used to say when I was a little kid, you know, God made it and it's good. You're going to eat it and like it and ask for more.

And you know, it could be asparagus or canned spinach or lima beans or wax beans or green peppers or any of the things that I don't even have on a list of proper food. But God made it and it's good. You know, starving kids over in some foreign country would love to eat that.

And maybe they would. But for the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness. It belonged to God before somebody misappropriated it to wave it in front of an idol.

I choose to look at the source and unless you make an issue out of its more immediate provenance, I'm not going to ask any questions. Conscience I say, verse 29, not your own. See why this phrase in 28 has to go? When I say conscience, Paul says, not your own, but that of the other.

What is helpful? What is edifying? What will best communicate the newness and the richness and the fullness and the sanctification that is a part of being in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with believers who are like minded and share that covenant, share that meal of truth, that bread and that cup that are a spiritual unity. But, verse 30, if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for food over which I gave thanks? Why am I evil spoken of if I ask God to sanctify it to the nourishment of my body in the same way that I ask God to sanctify His word to the nourishment of my soul? And if I am not identifying this food as idol food and look how free and liberated I am in eating this idol food, I am thanking God for the food. I am acknowledging God as the source and the creator and the provider of that food.

So if I have spiritually identified this physical thing as from God, it is part of the blessing that we appreciate and that we talk about. God has made it possible for me to eat this wonderful piece of food. Why would I be evil spoken of? Therefore, verse 31, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

This is eating or drinking in a wide variety of contexts. The communal meal that is shared at the church once or twice a week. The meal that you might be invited to at someone's house.

The meals at your own table. Anytime you eat or drink or anytime you do anything, it ought to be dedicated to the glory of God. Give no offense either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.

If you have a Jewish family over for supper, don't serve pork. Say, look how liberated I am. You can eat those green beans there.

Be sensitive. Respect the understanding that other people have. Paul said, when I'm around the

Jews, I act as though I'm Jewish.

I don't flagrantly, blatantly violate the law and say, you know, in Christ all of that stuff is passe. It's not helpful. It's not edifying in that context.

There are other and better ways to help them improve their understanding and come to faith and Christian practice than to shove lawlessness in their face. It's not sensitive. It's not helpful.

It's not love. It is not seeking the other's helpfulness and edification. So, give no offense.

Don't give offense to the Jews. Don't give offense to the Greeks. Don't give offense to the church of God.

In different contexts, one or more of those groups or types may be at issue. To the extent that it is up to you, live in peace with all. Don't make an issue.

It's not your place. Who makes the issue? Who is it that confronts the conscience with the rightness or wrongness of a thing? Whose job is that? Has God got an emissary here on earth for addressing the conscience about sin and righteousness and judgment? Yes, He does. It's not our place to elbow the Holy Spirit out of the way and say, I'm going to teach this person a few things about grace.

I'm going to teach this person a few things about legalism. I'm going to teach this person. I'm going to show them.

I'm going to confront them. Paul says, don't do it. What is helpful? What is edifying? Give no offense.

Don't raise an issue and beat somebody over the head with it. Just as I also please all in all. Notice men and things are in italics, and this is harking back to what I just described back in chapter 9, verse 15, 16, 17 of 9. He's referencing that again.

I please all in all, not seeking my own profit, but that of many that they may be delivered. I'm going to make the path as smooth and as clear as possible for them to come to faith and the knowledge, saving knowledge, living knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. So that is our criteria.

That's what the phronomos, what the wise who listen and reflect on what Paul is saying are going to see in it. It is the invisible. It is the influence.

It is the association and the fellowship in the invisible realm that is being referenced by these symbols and by these elements. It's not the elements themselves. It's not the meal itself.

It is why are you doing what you are doing? What effect is it having on others? And so he comes flat out and says in verse 14, flee idolatry. If somebody tells you something is idolatrous, now they've made the issue. You can acknowledge it.

You don't make the issue. If you flee it, you're not going to be confronting it. He doesn't say go up there and pick it.

March around the Temple of Artemis with signs and tell them they're all a bunch of godless pagans. He says stay away. Avoid.

Absent yourself. Don't be there. Right? And this is a word to the wise for some of the Christian activism that goes out and tries to confront what it disagrees with instead of absenting itself and setting a better and higher standard.

We don't push people into faith or push people into morality. What did the Lord Jesus do? If I be lifted up, I will draw. Let your light so shine that they see your good works and glorify your Father.

He doesn't say go down there and lasso them and tie them to a post and say see this? This is a good work and you're not doing it. So Paul attempts to be pleasing to all, to be inoffensive, to be at peace and to invite and to encourage. This is the model.

And that brings us to chapter 11 which really the first verse ought to be tacked on to 10 in my view. And you notice in my New King James it's in a little section all by itself and then there's a thing that says head coverings that starts verse 2. But verse 1 of chapter 11 is actually the last verse of chapter 10 in terms of thought units. Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ.

Did you notice the change in pronoun? It's always helpful to watch your pronouns. Paul says, if anyone says to you in verse 28, this was offered to idols, do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you and leave out conscience sake. The earth is the Lord in all its fullness.

Conscience I say not your own but that of the other. Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? Verse 29. Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? What he's saying is I'm not going to put my liberty out there to where the other man's conscience has to try to figure out if I'm right or if I'm wrong.

If I don't make an issue out of it, my practice isn't going to be the issue. He should be thinking about his practice. What are his decisions? What are his priorities? What are his associations? Not busy him with what I may be doing right or wrong or why I'm doing what I'm doing.

I should be absent. I partake verse 30. Why am I evil spoken of? Verse 31.

Whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. You give no offense either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God. Just as verse 33 and 11.1 go together.

I please all in all not seeking my own profit but that of many that they may be saved. Imitate me just as I Christ. It's all a thought unit that goes together.

Do what I do. I do what I talked about in chapter 9. I avoid confrontation. I avoid making a false

issue.

The issue is Christ. The issue is the new covenant. The issue is the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

Not what did you have for supper and where was it before you ate it. If somebody is going to make that an issue, we'll talk. But I'm not going to raise that issue.

I want them to be drawn to the Lord Jesus. Whether they're an unbeliever or a wayward believer, I want them to see Christ, appreciate Christ, share the cup of blessing that we share. Partake of the spiritual food that we partake of and be nourished and built up and helped.

That's the goal. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the wonderful sustenance that it provides for our souls. The fellowship that we enjoy as we together appreciate and lift up the Lord Jesus as our Savior, as your Son, as the coming King, as the head of all things to the church, as the one who invites us to walk with Him and to serve with Him and to accomplish your will with Him in the ages that are to come. We know that this is a wonderful time of training and opportunity to persevere in our challenges and learn as we grow in grace and knowledge.

We ask that our study this morning and our fellowship in it will contribute to that goal so that in all things, both as a group and as individuals, we do reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus and live in a way that's pleasing in your sight. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.