

1 Corinthians Class 13 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online.

This is class number 13 in our series on Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians.

In class number 12 last week, we received **two questions**, so let's briefly address those as we begin the class this time.

First of all:

In 1 Corinthians 10, verses 3 and 4, Paul said that the Israelites ate the same spiritual food and drink—and drank the same spiritual drink, rather. You seemed to say that the term *spiritual* applied to the fact that the food and drink had a divine origin, Jesus Christ, which is of course true. But isn't this also a reference to the spiritual truths that they were given but could not fully understand?

Well, yes. I certainly did not mean to rush over that aspect of it. It is clear that they were unable to fully comprehend and utilize the spiritual truths that God provided to them. In spite of God sharing His way of life with them, they didn't really fully comprehend the spiritual nature of those instructions. And likewise, it's clear that the Spirit of God influenced some people, but not in the way it does for the person who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him or her.

For example, in Exodus 28:3 and in Exodus 31 verse 3, both refer to *the Spirit from God* influencing workmen in the creation of items for the tabernacle, but not in the sense of a spiritual conversion involved.

The author of Hebrews puts it this way in Hebrews 4 and verse 2: *For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

[2:13]

So again, he makes the point that, yes, they were provided with spiritual food and drink from God, but it didn't have the full effect because they really couldn't comprehend it.

While I certainly intended to emphasize what Paul was saying in showing in this passage that Jesus Christ was the one referred to as *God* in those passages about food and drink, we certainly don't want to overlook the additional aspect about the spiritual nature of that food and drink.

The **second** question we received was actually a specific question about the availability of transcripts for the classes. And, we won't try to address that particular question for that person, but it is a good opportunity to remind you that if you feel that receiving a written transcript of the class would be helpful for you, those transcripts are available. Some people learn best by reading, some by hearing, some by seeing, some by doing. So, if you're one of those individuals that feels having a written transcript would be helpful, then feel free to click on the link, and you'll be able to download an electronic copy for your own use. We're happy to make

those available to you. So if that's helpful to you, please go right ahead and do so.

That covers our two questions, and as always, before we actually get into this particular class, we do want to ask God's blessing. So if you would, bow your heads and join me, please.

[Prayer]

[4:40]

For the class today, we're going to continue on with a subject that we've been looking at for the last couple of classes. It began in **1 Corinthians chapter 8**, where the question was asked about food *offered to idols*, and whether it was all right to eat that food. Of course, Paul begins with a profound statement. He says, "*We all have knowledge; knowledge puffs up, love builds up,*" and he begins to build upon that concept as we go forward.

Again, as we've said before, one of the issues that was affecting the Corinthian congregation was this approach of a certain degree of spiritual pride, of trying to be superior to one another. And, Paul has given a very important principle as well that says: "It may be legal, but does that mean this is the **best** thing to do?"

Yes, we must stay within the confines, the parameters, of the law that God gives, but within that, God gives us certain freedoms. How do we make decisions within those freedoms? So, **chapter 8** began that discussion, through **chapter 9**, and now we've moved into **chapter 10**.

The last class, we covered a bit about ancient Israel, and it's still continuing the subject because Paul is making the point that knowledge was not the problem where ancient Israel was concerned. They had the knowledge of the true God. God had spoken to them. They knew what was expected of them, but they still came terribly short. Now, that's not just a condemnation of them. Paul tells us here, as we just read a couple of verses earlier: "All of those things happened to them for *examples* so that we can learn the lessons." It's important for us too.

We finished through **verse 12** in the last class, so let's continue here in **verse 13**, a verse that I think many of us have found comforting and encouraging.

Paul writes: [**1 Corinthians 10:13**] *No temptation (or trial, test) has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it.*

[7:03]

Now there are several things I think we need to note here as we look at this. One of the aspects is—and it doesn't necessarily come through in English, but it does in the Greek—it tells us that when you get into these situations—yes, many of our brethren down through the ages have encountered similar situations—it tells us here in the English, it says: *God is faithful*. In the Greek it's more dramatic: *Faithful is the God*. The God that we have is a *faithful God*. And he tells us that what God will do is: He will not allow us to be tested *beyond what we're*

able. But, as it says, He makes a way of escape, to be *able to bear it*.

Now I think many times when you and I are in trials, what we want from God is definitely a way of escape. “Please, make this trial end! Make it go away. I’m done. I don’t want to go through this.” That isn’t exactly what it says God will do. It says He will make it possible for us to *be able to bear up*.

Now why would that be? Why would it be that God would put us through something like this instead of just, when we pray and we ask His blessing, to take us out of it completely?

Well, He’s covered that in a sense when He talks about a trial that maybe pushes us to the point of, as far as we’re able to go. He doesn’t take us beyond that.

I remember years ago, a gentleman who was an engineer at NASA was giving a presentation where he talked about a certain process that takes place where construction-grade steel is involved. And he talked about how that, when the steel is cast, and it’s first made available, it has a certain strength to it. But, what is sometimes done is then to stress that, to put a weight on it, to stress it almost to the breaking point and hold it there for a period of time. And, when then the pressure is taken off, that steel now has—the molecules, in essence, have realigned in such a way that it has greater strength than it ever had before. So in a sense, that’s kind of what God does with us. He stresses us, or allows us to be stressed at times, so that we will be stronger.

Admittedly, sometimes when we’re in the midst of those trials, it sure feels like we’ve gone as far as we can go and God is trying to take us beyond that. But God alone knows what we are capable of, and therefore this verse tells us that we need to rely upon Him in those situations.

[9:51]

Now, at the same time, I think there’s another aspect of this. We not only can rely on God, that He’s not going to take us to the breaking point because He doesn’t want us to break; He wants us to be stronger. But, sometimes it may be that God wants us to understand our limits too. Sometimes it may be good for us to go to God, to take this verse with us, and to remind God: “You promised You wouldn’t push me beyond what I’m *able to bear*. I really feel like I’m reaching beyond what I can *bear*, so please, grant the help that I need, either to relieve this trial or to give me the strength to *bear it*, if that’s what I need to do.”

That’s what Jesus Christ did in the Garden of Gethsemane. Remember, He went to God and He said, “If there’s any way this cup can pass from Me, let it pass, but if not, Your will be done.” **[Mark 14:36]**

This is a good example of that. He had that perfect trust in God that God would not take Him further than it was possible to go, but at the same time He could rely upon God to be there for Him and to help Him be *able to bear* through those difficulties. Maybe at times God wants us to understand our limits, so we can go to Him and say: “I can’t take any more.” And many times God will intervene when we’ve reached those points.

So He goes on to say now, again, not changing the subject, but continuing on.

Verse 14 He says: *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

Okay, now we're coming back to the subject that we started in **chapter 8**: food *offered to idols*. Now remember, in **chapter 8** Paul said: "Well, the *idol is nothing*. There is no god there; there's no being that has the power to change the nature of the food that's there." So on one hand, *knowledge* tells us: since we have the *knowledge* that there is only one true God, we have the *knowledge* to tell us that these *idols* can't do anything to harm the food. But Paul has been going further, and he's been telling us there may be other things that you need to consider.

Now, he says: "...*flee from idolatry.*" *Flee*—get away from this.

Again, we get back to this question, "Is it acceptable to eat food *offered to idols*?"

Paul's response has been, so far, that Christians—those who have the *knowledge*, as well as the weak Christians—need to *flee* from all things that seem to compromise with *idolatry*. The principle is applicable to a lot of other areas in life as well. There are things that we should *flee* because they appear to compromise with the standards that God would expect us to live. Our attitude must never be to see how close to something can I get and not be guilty of sin. If it's a wrong practice—as *idolatry* is—then I want to stay far away from it.

[12:53]

So, Paul makes this statement in **verse 15**: *I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.*

Now there's a passage later on in **2 Corinthians** where Paul refers to these folks—or at least some of those in Corinth—as "wise men," where he's being a little bit—I guess we could say—sarcastic, because they saw themselves as **so** wise. But that's not really the point here. Paul is saying: "Okay, you want to be *wise* people. You want to be discerning, and that's good; you should be. God wants you to be that way too. So as a *wise* person, use this godly wisdom to *judge for yourselves what* I'm saying."

You see, Paul could have very easily just simply said: "Do it this way." But you see, that would have been an apostolic decision, and, all the people had to do was to submit or not. That would have been their only choice. But Paul is saying: "Let's think this through together. Use the wisdom that the Spirit of God gives you, that the Word of God gives you. What conclusion would you come to about this?" Because if they *judge for* themselves, it becomes their decision, not something imposed upon them by the apostle.

So Paul uses a very specific example that's leading up very close to the Passover, which he's going to talk about in the next chapter.

He says: **verse 16** *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (the sharing, a participation) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (the sharing) of the body of Christ?*

Now all of us would well understand there's only one cup that symbolizes the *blood of Jesus Christ*, and that's *the cup* that we take at Passover. *The bread* that's broken that symbolizes the *body of Jesus Christ* is at the Passover. Even the next night we will be using unleavened bread, but it doesn't symbolize the broken body of Christ then; it symbolizes lack of sin, being unleavened spiritually.

But at the Passover service, that broken bread symbolizes one thing and one thing only: the broken *body of Jesus Christ*. So, Paul refers to that, and he says: "All right, when you consider that—this *cup* that we all partake of when we go to that Passover service—every one of us partakes of the same kind of *cup*, in that sense." We don't just pass one *cup* around, but we use the individual cups, but it's, in essence, one *cup*. We've asked it all to be blessed as a symbol of the *blood of Jesus Christ*. When we share that, are we not—each one of us—sharing in the sacrifice of Christ? We are recognizing its importance in our lives, and every one of us by partaking of the *cup* are partaking of the sacrifice. Likewise, where the bread is concerned, we are doing the same thing.

[15:53]

So Paul brings this up, and he's not changing the subject. He's still very much talking about the subject of whether it's appropriate to eat food that's been sacrificed to an *idol*.

He goes on to say: **verse 17** *For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.*

So Paul is saying: when you and I partake of the bread of the Passover service, there is a unifying effect in that. All of us are partaking of the same thing. When we partake of that symbol of the sacrifice of Christ, we are participants, in that sense, as recipients of that sacrifice. It's the same for all of us. No, it's not different for anyone. No one has more or less involved with this. It's the same for all. And he uses this to tell us something that's very important to the subject.

You see, this takes us all the way back to Paul's original concern—the Church being divided. And Paul is emphasizing that when we come together at the Passover, there's no room for division. There's no reason for division because every one of us takes exactly the same symbols for exactly the same reason. He emphasizes that what unifies the body of Christ is not something physical, but sharing in that sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When all of us are united with Him through that sacrifice, we're automatically united with one another. That's another reason why the symbols of the bread and the wine must be taken very seriously. That's what he talks about as we'll get into that next chapter.

But as we look here in **verse 18**, he says: (Okay, keeping that in mind,) *Observe Israel after the flesh: —*

Okay, physical Israel—that's the point he's making.

—*Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?*

Now in the system that God set up for ancient Israel, when a sacrifice was given—we're not really talking here so much about the sin offering, trespass offering, but a thank offering, a goodwill offering that is given at times. When an individual brought that to the priest, a certain portion of it was burned, a portion of it was given to the priests, and the individual received a certain portion of it back, and then, very often, held a feast with other friends or family members to share in this very special opportunity. After all, they didn't have refrigeration, so any meat that was there would need to be used up pretty quickly.

So it was a time of feasting, and it was something that you shared. But the idea, the symbolism involved, was: God consumed a part of the sacrifice, and you consumed a part of the sacrifice. In other words, you were, in a sense, sharing symbolically a meal with God. Remember we talked about back in **chapter 5** where God said that when there's someone who is a believer but is living in sin, *not to even eat with* them? We made the point there that sharing a meal is a special kind of fellowship that helps bind people together.

[19:10]

Well, the same was true with that kind of a sacrifice in ancient Israel. There was, in that sense, a sharing of a meal with God, a special binding together of God's people with God. So, he uses that metaphor here, and he says: "Okay, when the individuals of ancient Israel brought a sacrifice and they ate that portion that was there, were they not partakers of the altar?" They were partakers of that worship of the God that was there. Their sacrifice and even their meal were part of the worship of that God.

So Paul says: [**1 Corinthians 10:**] **19** *What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?*

In other words, he's making the point: "What do you derive from this? Am I now turning around and saying: 'Oh, well, this idol should be considered'? The decision of whether to partake of the food *offered to an idol* or not is not based upon whether other gods exist or not, or on whether those idols represent those other gods. But there is a basis for it."

*Rather, (he says: **verse 20**) that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrificed to demons —*

Now, he's talked about what Israel sacrificed. They sacrificed to the true God, and they were partakers with that God. But he says, with *the Gentiles*, they *sacrifice to demons*.

—not to God. And they do not, and I do not want you, to have fellowship with demons.

In other words, when you partook of the sacrifice that God had in the tabernacle, or later, the temple, you were participating with God. He says: "When you participate in the sacrifices that are given by the pagans, that are really in the long run given to demonic powers, you're having fellowship with demons." He says: "I don't want that to happen. I don't want you to be in that situation where you are exposing yourself to *fellowship with* demonic powers. That's not where a Christian should be."

Now please understand that in much of the world, the polytheistic world, there are hundreds and hundreds of gods that are worshipped. Early on in **chapter 8** we showed some pictures from the Hindu world where these foods were offered to their deities. Very often what's involved there is a demonic power, and there are demonic things that happen as a result of those actions. And as a result, people are convinced there's a supernatural power. Well, there is. It's not God. But yes, there are things that happen.

So Paul is saying: this takes place when you are involved in the worship of *demons*, even if you call them whatever you want. You can call them gods. You can call them any number of other things, but you're worshipping spiritual powers that are contrary to God. He said: "I don't want you to have participation in that."

He says: **verse 21** *You cannot* (You are not able to. It is prohibited for you to) *drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.*

[22:16]

You cannot combine the worship of false gods with the worship of the true God, to combine Christianity and paganism. Christians have to choose which one they will serve, and they have to completely leave the other behind. "Oh, but," some people might say, "but what if we take those ways of worshipping the old gods, the pagan gods, the demons, and give it a Christian-sounding name? We can call it 'Christmas,' or 'Easter,' or some of those other celebrations." No, you're still partaking of what God condemns, so that's not something that we as Christians do.

God doesn't find it acceptable simply because we changed the name. So **knowledge** isn't all that matters. There's more to it than that.

And then he says—and it's kind of an unusual statement: **verse 22** *Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?*

Now, that sounds kind of strange. What do we mean by that?

One of the commentaries puts it this way:

The conclusion is that if we as Christians share in pagan idolatry, we will arouse or stir up the Lord's jealousy and thus incite Him to action in His hatred of sin, and for mixed allegiance. "And surely," Paul says, "we're not stronger than God." We cannot overcome or subdue His jealousy and anger against sin by sharing in pagan practices. He will be very upset about that!

Now I want to look at a couple of other quick translations there.

Notice the *New Living Translation*. It says:

[1 Corinthians 10:22] *What? Do we dare to rouse the Lord's jealousy...? Do you think we're stronger than He is?*

Or the *New International Version*:

Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

So Paul's making a strong statement here: "If you participate in these things, that's what you seem to be doing. And do you think that somehow God's going to sit back and not be concerned? Just kind of smile and say, 'Well, okay, you've done something that pagans did, but oh, you know there's nothing there, so it's okay.'" No, it isn't okay! God says: "You avoid *idolatry*. You *flee* every form of the worship of false gods."

[24:41]

So we come back to that wonderful principle that Paul gave us earlier.

Verse 23 *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.* (Not all things build up.)

Now again, we don't pull this out of context. Paul cannot be saying that it's lawful for him to do anything that crosses his mind. That he can murder, he can commit adultery, he can have other gods. Of course not! Those things are not lawful. Paul is saying that: "Those things which God permits are lawful for me to do. All lawful things are lawful for me," is the sense of what he's saying.

"But," as he said, "not all of them are helpful or profitable or advantageous. What is legally permissible is not the only standard I have to consider. I must also consider whether what's legal for me could have a negative impact upon others, so I have to be concerned about what builds up."

Now in this, again, this isn't the first time we've read this passage, this concept, is it? It was found in **chapter 6** and **verse 12**. So he comes back to that principle. He circled all the way through in answering this.

Now, if you stop and consider it, that principle goes all the way back to the beginning of the epistle. Think about some of these things:

- It was not **sinful** for the Corinthians to choose which minister they liked best: Paul, Apollos, Peter. It wasn't sinful to choose that. But, it didn't build up the Church. It didn't build up other Christians.
- It was not **sinful** to build on the proper foundation with inferior materials, as we saw in **chapter 3**. But that wouldn't last, so that wouldn't be something that edifies.
- It wasn't **sinful** to be patient with a person who is guilty of sin, as we saw in **chapter 5**. But, allowing the person who was practicing sin to continue in the congregation didn't build up the sinner nor the congregation; so it didn't build up.
- It wasn't directly against the law to take another Christian to court, but it sure didn't build

up the Church. It tore it down.

- When we got to the marriage relationship in **chapter 7**, there's a latitude in that relationship. But as he said, we can't just consider what our rights are. We have to consider what's going to build that relationship. If we demand our way of our mate—yes, you do have a certain right to do that—but you're going to damage that relationship instead of building it up.

Now we're being told that the answer to eating food sacrificed *to idols* isn't just about the letter of the law. Harming our brother's conscience doesn't build up. And as we move through the end of this chapter and into **chapter 11**, where we talk about the Passover, that principle is going to be vital there too, and we're going to see it even in the chapters beyond that.

[28:05]

But Paul isn't done with the whole question yet. What is he going to tell us here about this food *offered to idols*? Because, remember, in Corinth, as in many of the other cities of the first century world, that was normal. This would be true for the brethren in Rome, in Ephesus, in a lot of different places where there was food that was available in meat markets, and you didn't know whether that food had been offered to an idol or not. It wasn't a part of an idol's ceremony. You weren't going into the temple to participate, but the food was there, and it might have been offered to an idol, and if you weren't going to eat that then, well, you probably wouldn't be able to get meat much at all. So, what are we supposed to do beyond that?

So, Paul says: **verse 24** *Let no one seek his own (or, **only** his own), but each one the other's well-being.* (The things, the concerns that belong to others is the idea.)

It doesn't imply that it's wrong to give appropriate consideration for the needs of yourself or your family; that's perfectly all right. But when those needs become more important than anything else, when others may be abused or neglected because we're going to "make sure we get ours," then we have a problem. So Paul's telling us not to do that. Now he's going to specifically move on to this.

Verse 25 *Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake;*

Okay, when you go to the meat market, you don't have to ask: "Was this offered to an idol?" All right. Now again, many people will look at this and they'll say, "Oh, well, see, it's okay. You go to the meat market, and you don't have to ask any questions like: 'Is that pork?' You can just go ahead and buy it and eat it." That's **not** what it says. That's **not** been our subject. Our subject for **three chapters** has been food *offered to idols*.

Now he says: "As a matter of conscience, you don't have to go to the meat market and ask them whether that food was offered to an idol or not." The *idol is nothing*, and the meat in the meat market is **completely** removed from any of the actual sacrificial service. So Paul says: "Yeah, there's no reason that you shouldn't be able to eat it."

[30:37]

It is possible to be overly picky about things. And that may be a part of what people were saying here: “Well, you know, it might have been offered to an idol, so I don’t want to eat it.” Okay, don’t eat it. It’s your choice. Paul doesn’t say you have to eat it. But he’s saying: “Look. You’re not participating with the idol worship when you walk into the butcher shop. That’s not what you’re doing.”

Now, you may choose to have your own standards. There are some people who would say, “Well, I don’t want to eat chicken unless it’s free-range chicken. I don’t want it to be some poor chicken that was cooped up in a pen and didn’t have a chance to run around and eat whatever. So I don’t want to eat those things.” Okay, that’s fine. But it is not morally superior; it’s simply a personal choice you make. We will see—well, we won’t go to Romans right now—but if we were to go to **Romans chapter 14**, we would find the subject of vegetarianism, and probably it relates to this same kind of thing.

There were probably people who were saying, “Well, you never know whether it’s offered to an idol or not, so maybe you’d be better off just not to eat meat at all. I’ll just be a vegetarian.” And Paul basically says, “Fine. Be a vegetarian. But don’t judge the people who don’t feel that way because you’re not more moral. If somebody thinks being a vegetarian is more moral than being someone who eats meat, you’re mistaken.”

Paul calls that, in **Romans 14**, an idea of a weak person. That’s not where God is. God created the foods to be eaten. If you, for whatever reason, choose not to eat certain things, that’s your choice. That’s up to you, but it’s not a moral issue. The meat is physical, and physical things do not have a moral quality to them of being good or evil. Now, in the Greek world, people thought they did. But no, that’s not the way things are. It’s simply an object. And Paul says: “*In the meat market* you’re welcome to go ahead and *eat* it.”

You *ask no question for conscience’ sake*. Now again, this doesn’t mean you don’t ask what the meat is. If you don’t recognize what it is, then by all means, ask what it is. We’re not dealing with clean and unclean foods here.

I remember hearing of a friend many years ago in college who had the opportunity to spend a summer in France, and unfortunately his French was not as good as he thought it might be. And he came back telling the story of how he had gone to Sabbath services and was sharing with the brethren that he found a wonderful meat market that had really, really good prices. And when the members began to ask him questions about it, what kind of meat was it, and he said, “Oh, it was *cheval*.” Evidently no one had ever told him that *cheval* is the French word for “horse.” So he’d been eating horse meat.

[33:28]

Well, obviously, that’s not what we want to do. So if you don’t recognize what it is, it’s perfectly fine to ask: “What is it?” But asking “What is it?” is not a **conscience** issue; it’s a **fact** issue. “Is this beef? Is this lamb? Is this horse? Is this pig?” That’s a perfectly legitimate question to ask. But when it comes to **conscience** issues—“Was it offered to an idol?” —he says that’s not necessary.

for (verse 26) “*the earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness.*”

Now this is a quote from **Psalm 24** and **verse 1**, and there are three or four other passages where it’s used. And it was also a part of a typical Jewish blessing at a meal. Since everything belongs to God, He has the ability to provide whatever we need. All of those things that are permissible for us to eat, that are lawful for us to eat, ultimately are made available to us by God. We don’t choose them; God makes them available. He set up the system. He created cows, and lambs, and so on, that we may be able to enjoy those meats. That’s fine. God created it that way, intended it that way. It’s fine; we can do that.

So the *fullness* that God provides is there, and man can’t take away from, or artificially prohibit, what God says is good. Man doesn’t have that right. So *the earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness*. What God provides for us as food, we can enjoy.

[35:03]

But now he moves to another aspect of it. And again, many times people have misunderstood this.

He said: **verse 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.*

Again, *asking no question* on the basis of *conscience*. So here is an unbeliever. They have asked you to their home for dinner, and, for whatever reason, you’re inclined to do that. It may be a family member; it may be somebody from work; it may be a next-door neighbor. There are any number of reasons why we might choose to share a meal with someone who is not a believer. And, then they bring the food to you and put it in front of you. Paul is saying: “You don’t have to ask questions about whether it was ever *offered to an idol* or not. You don’t have to ask them: ‘Where did you get it?’ ”

But now, wait a minute—what if they put before you a slice of ham? Does this verse tell you, “Oh, go ahead and eat it, *asking no question for conscience sake.*” No. That’s not what this says. This tells us that, on the basis of conscience, you don’t have to ask a question. If someone serves you a meal—they serve, let’s say they’re passing a plate around that has meat on it, and you don’t know exactly what it is—is it wrong for you to ask: “What is this?” Well, no. Of course not! It’s perfectly legitimate. And, what if they decide, you know—they serve you something, and you’re not really sure. And they tell you:

“Oh, that’s a pork roast.”

“Oh, okay. Thank you very much.”

And you pass it on. You don’t make an issue out of it. You’re not worried about it. That’s not a conscience issue; that’s a factual issue. So you don’t have to—if you’re going to have dinner with someone who is not a believer, you don’t have to ask if the food’s been offered to an idol. Don’t worry about it. However, Paul’s going to tell us something else might happen in that situation. So let’s look at this.

We come to **verse 28**: *But if anyone says to you, —*

Now obviously we're in the same situation. You're eating a meal that is provided by somebody who's not a believer.

... anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," —

Now again, notice we're not dealing with the subject of clean and unclean meats. The person did not come to you and say: "That's pork." That's a different matter. But *this was offered to idols*. Then it says: *don't eat it*.

—do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness."

Oh, so someone comes to you in this situation and says: *this food was offered to an idol*. Well now, you've already decided, properly, that the fact that it was offered to an idol somewhere back up the line, but you bought it in the butcher's shop, you had nothing to do with the idol worship—it's perfectly legitimate. You can enjoy it. But this person who comes to you evidently hasn't come to that conclusion. They're seeing it a little differently. They're concerned about it.

[38:17]

Now, why would somebody bring that to your attention? Well basically, I think there are about three different reasons why it might be that way.

1. It could be a fellow-believer who believes that eating food offered to an idol, even though you bought it from the butcher shop, is something you shouldn't do. Well, then their conscience would be defiled if they saw you, the good Church member, eating it. And we'll see that as we go a little further. So, they might bring it to your attention because it was an issue for them, and they thought that it might be an issue for you too. So they wanted to, kindly, let you know that that was the situation.

One of the commentaries says:

It implies the disclosure of a secret which the brother reveals because he thinks his companion is in danger.

Okay.

2. Now, the second reason that someone might tell you this is: well, what if the person who is the host, who is not a believer, is concerned that maybe what they provided would be something that, you know, you would be concerned about if you knew it was offered to an idol. So, what if they told you out of consideration: "Oh, before you take this, you should know I got this from the idol's temple." Okay. Then they would tell you that, and you would say: "Oh, okay. Well then, thank you very much, but I'll have something else."
3. The third reason might be someone testing you—probably a non-believer; I don't think a

believer would do this to a brother. But they could be testing you and saying: “Okay, let’s just see if you’ll eat what’s *offered to an idol*. In which case, again, you would say: “Oh, no thank you,” and pass it on.

Now he goes on to say, and again this concept here is: *for “the earth is the LORD’s and all its fullness.”*

[40:10]

What’s the meaning there? Well, God provides the meat, and I can eat it. But, if there’s a conscience issue, God provides plenty of other things. The whole earth is God’s, and I’m not going to starve because I don’t eat the food offered to an idol. So I don’t have to worry about it. I can have something else.

Now perhaps you’ve had a situation like this come up in your life, not so much with idols, but perhaps people have done it with clean and unclean foods. I know I’ve had situations where we’ve dealt with family members who know that we don’t eat unclean foods, and they might bring it to our attention:

“Oh, by the way, don’t eat the green beans. We put some bacon in there.”

“Okay, thank you! I appreciate it!”

They don’t make a big deal out of it. We don’t either. We move along. That’s just fine.

My wife and I traditionally go back and have Thanksgiving with her family, and only her grandmother was a Church member, and she’s been dead for a number of years. So, nobody there is a Church member, and yes, some of the food does have unclean things in it, but her family’s always been very, very considerate of us, and they would let us know: “Don’t take any of this; it’s got ‘that’ in it,” and we’re fine. Nobody makes a big issue out of it.

So it tells us here, I don’t have to make a big issue out of this thing.

Now this isn’t a matter that somebody comes out here and puts a piece of squid on the plate in front of you, and you’re just supposed to smile and eat it and not ask any questions. No, that’s not what it’s saying. Our question here is about food *offered to idols*. Now he’s talked about conscience—someone’s conscience being involved.

He said there in **verse 24 [28]**: *... 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 he clarifies that: **verse 29** *“Conscience,” I say, not your own, but that of the other.* (The person who brought it to your attention, consider their conscience. So, not your own, but that of the other.) *For why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience?*

[42:15]

Well, again, he’s not saying, “This is unfair,” but he is saying, “Okay, I have certain freedom. And, if I go ahead and exercise my freedom, contrary to somebody else’s conscience, then

they're going to be judging my liberty rather harshly. There's no reason for that. There's no reason to put a stumbling block in front of the other person. If I refrain from eating, he doesn't condemn my actions based on his conscience."

Verse 30 *But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?*

Now, again, we have to understand this in a right perspective. It's talking about, not clean and unclean foods, but food *offered to idols*. And, Paul is saying: "Is this something that I should be concerned about if I partake with *thanks*? Isn't that enough?"

Now, believe it or not—and there are other places in Scripture that we'll perhaps look at in another FI Online series—but there are other places in Scripture that talk about giving thanks for those things which God made. And literally, some of the commentaries will say that even though in the Old Testament certain foods were unclean, they're fine for you to eat as long as you give thanks for them. Now, somehow giving thanks changes unclean food into clean? That doesn't make sense!

Sometimes I've told the students, and I've tried to apply this principle: If you're going to say, use this certain principle that *thanks* makes it okay, can I apply that same thing to other laws of God besides clean and unclean foods? As long as I—let's say for example, if I steal something from my neighbor, but I'm thankful for it, does that make it okay? What a ridiculous idea! No. *Thanks* doesn't change the nature of right and wrong. That's not what we're talking about.

[44:19]

But, Paul is saying: "Okay, when I have this, and I *give thanks* to God for whom everything is—belongs to Him; He's the one that's provided—but if I were to go ahead and partake of it, I can be evil spoken of by the person whose conscience hasn't come to that point yet?" So, as one commentary puts it: Why incur the risk of being evil spoken of, or defamed, for the sake of maintaining one's liberty? It's not worth that.

One of the older commentaries, *Barnes' Notes*, makes this statement here in this passage. It says:

The idea of the verse, then, is this: "By the favor of God, I have a right to partake of this food. But if I did, I should be evil spoken of, and do injury. And it is unnecessary. God has made ample provision elsewhere for my support, for which I may be thankful. I will not therefore expose myself to reproach, or be the occasion of injury to others by partaking of the food offered in sacrifice to idols."

So when you're in that unique situation of dining with somebody who is an unbeliever, and they provided the food, then you're told: you don't have to ask questions about whether it's offered to an idol. It's irrelevant. But if someone brings it to your attention, it's no longer irrelevant. It's a concern to them, and you must first consider your brother.

So, he says: **verse 31** *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the*

glory of God. (We're supposed to have that in mind as we go forward.)

He says: **32** *Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,*

It's interesting that Paul brings that out. As much as possible, we are to be without offense toward all people, whether in the Church or outside. So, when he talks about the "Church of God," that could be either Jew or gentile. But he also separately lists: Jews, gentiles, Church of God. So he's saying: "Don't give offense, even to those who are not part of the Church. You have to consider them, approach things in a proper way."

The fact that someone's not yet called to the Church doesn't mean we have the right to treat them disrespectfully. Likewise, because someone is **in** the Church doesn't mean we can run roughshod over their concerns and needs.

So finally, **verse 33**, he says: *just as I also please all men in all things, —*

Remember, he talked about being all things to all people—not compromising with God's truth, not "pleasing" in the sense of not pleasing God—but, "Where I can reach those people where they are in a pleasant way, yes, by all means, I do that."

—not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

We have an interesting phrase in our modern terminology. We say: "It's not about **me**." I've got to look bigger than just me. I've got to consider others in this process. The Christian has to live a life where he or she is **constantly** aware of the impact of his words and actions on other people. If someone is focused on their "rights," you're going to always end up unnecessarily offending others and feeling justified in doing so, creating more division.

[47:56]

Now that leads us to **chapter 11**. And the beginning of **chapter 11** is an interesting section, a challenging section. And there are certain things here that we really don't fully understand because it has to do with certain cultural aspects of what's going on. But the principles are very important for us.

When we look at **chapter 11** and **verse 1**, Paul says: *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*

Many of the commentaries will say: Well, really, that probably belongs at the end of **chapter 10**, instead of at the beginning of **chapter 11**, and I can see it both ways. It certainly does make sense that Paul has given all of this instruction and then he says: "Follow my example." Yes, and I think that's true. That certainly would fit at the end of **chapter 10**. But, it also fits here too. So there's a continuation of thought.

He says, **verse 2**: *Now I praise you, brethren, —*

Okay, he's had to be somewhat corrective. He has brought out a certain level of pride and perhaps a level of hypocrisy in some of the questions that have come forward. But he said—he calls them *brethren*; he calls them "family members," his brothers and sisters. And he praises them, and there's no tongue-in-cheek thing here; he's genuinely praising them.

—*that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.*

He says: “*I praise you* in this. You’ve done a good job. There are certain things that you’ve done well. You remember me.” Now this isn’t just a random statement that they often thought about Paul. He’s probably referring to the point of view back in **verse 1** about “imitating.” He wants them to consider the example he set among them, and to realize he wasn’t just doing what he thought was “good”; he was imitating Jesus Christ. And that’s what they should do too.

He talks about keeping *the traditions*. The Greek word there basically means “that which is handed down or handed across,” *paradosis*. *Para* means basically, “across,” and *dosis* means “handing something.” So: to hand across or to hand down something; a traditional instruction.

[50:16]

Paul is telling them that there are certain things that have been passed along to them that are not set in stone in Scripture, but are traditions. We have many traditions in the Church of God. No matter where you go on earth, you will find basically the same order of service for Church services. There’s no place in the Bible that says: “Do it this way.” But, we have a tradition in the Church, and wherever you go, that tradition is upheld, and it’s very helpful. As many traditions do, they give a sense of consistency, of security. Wherever you are, you know what’s coming; you know what to expect. You know how things are going to be done. There’s not some strange thing going on. And there are many different kinds of traditions. You probably have certain traditions in your family, traditions of perhaps a Friday evening family meal together, or perhaps a certain time when you pray together. Those are traditions.

You know, my wife and I have had a tradition that when we leave each other at the beginning of the day, we’ll have a brief prayer together. Before we go to bed at night, we get down and pray together. That’s always something that we’ve tried to do. And even when we’re apart, sometimes we’ll call each other on the phone and be able to pray together at the end of the day. It’s a tradition. There’s nothing that says you have to do that. But it’s important, and it is something that unifies and helps us be connected, not only to each other, but to God.

So traditions are important, and Paul is making the point that he didn’t try to impose his own ideas, his own standards, on them. He passed along what had become the established pattern of living the Christian life in the Church. But, he says—and here’s an issue that begins to come up. And again, we have to say we struggle to fully understand all that’s going on here.

He says: **verse 3** *But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

Okay. Paul is now trying to explain something to them. And it’s, I think, it’s a difficult section for us, in some ways, to understand. Many of the commentaries, as they look at this, talk about: “Well, what Paul is going to discuss here is how you should conduct yourself in public worship.” Well, I don’t think that holds up as you look through here. After all, he’s going to talk about women praying and prophesying, but as we go just a couple chapters further in **chapter**

14 and **verse 34**, he's going to say the women are silent in the public worship service. So, how can he then, here, be talking about what you do, praying and prophesying in a public service, when later on he says, "You don't say anything in the public service"? So there's a little bit we don't understand fully here.

[53:06]

We can't really grasp it fully, but we could conclude that there is here general instruction about the way Christian men and women are to appear at all times, whatever the situation may be. Certainly may include services, but I really don't think we can say it's limited to that. We may not be able to decipher all that's involved here, but there are some important principles that I think we can understand and apply.

Part of what we might consider as well: remember that in the ancient Roman world, in Corinth and in various other places throughout the Roman Empire, even in Judaism to a certain extent, women were not treated as equals. They were treated as, in many cases, the possession of their husband. They belonged to him. They were like anything else that he might own. Christianity changed that relationship a great deal.

Now, we can go back to the very beginning. (Some of you will remember that Mr. Armstrong was very fond of going back to the very beginning.) And when we find Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, created prior to sin entering that picture, we don't find superiority/inferiority. We do find a marriage relationship where Adam is to be the head, but not because he's superior. But in fact, we find a relationship, a partnership, between man and woman that's very, very special. Sin enters the world, and things change a great deal. But, what we find down through time was that the system that humans came up with is not the one that God had, that saw a man and woman as equals before Him—spiritual equals with the same wonderful hope for the future as the sons and daughters of God in all the unique relationship that that brings.

So women were very often put down and considered, as we said, virtually property. Their thoughts were not really considered in the synagogue service. The women could kind of sit and listen, but they **never** participated. That isn't the way that God fully intends things to be. I'm not saying that women are taking part in service in some instructive way or something like that, but simply saying that the women were not viewed as having any—their ideas, their influence pretty much minimized. Christianity comes on the scene, and as we see in **Ephesians** and as we've seen in other places as well, Paul talks directly to the women as equals. He addresses them and gives God's instruction for them, just as he does for the men.

[55:50]

So, what happens when people have been in one position, and then they understand: "Oh, that's not the right way," that in fact God did not intend it that way? Well, most of us as human beings have a tendency to go to the other ditch. So it may well be that some of these women who were treated almost as property suddenly went to the other ditch. Perhaps even their husbands encouraged it. That may be a part of the issue. We really don't know the whole story

here, but, let's understand the principles we can derive from this.

1. Among those, I would say first of all, everyone has a responsibility and accountability to voluntarily submit to God's created order. He begins with that created order in **verse 3**, and all of us have a responsibility to submit to the position God has placed us within.
2. Second, it tells us that men and women are spiritually equal but physically different, and both must be personally submissive to God. We both have a responsibility there to submit to the position and responsibility God's given to us.
3. And third, it also tells us that the way a Christian man or woman appears physically matters to God. And it's not relegated to just simply personal comfort or preference. There's more that needs to be considered as we appear before God. Now this would include at all times, but certainly it would include services, going to Church, and so on. Not simply a matter of "my comfort" or "my preference." It's a matter of how we appear before God as men and women. That's an important aspect of personal submission.

Now he says here, as he uses this term, he says: *I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

The term is used here, *kephalē*, means, again, "the head; to be in a preeminent position." Christ is supreme over every man. Every man, whoever you are, you are to be submissive to Jesus Christ. That's your position. You are created in that position. The husband is head, in this case, within the family relationship where his wife is concerned. And, God the Father is over Jesus Christ. There is a chain of instruction or authority that's given there.

Now I want you to note something here as well, lest I skip over it. This is not a statement that every woman must be subject to every man. There is a unique relationship here. The woman is subject to her husband. The husband is the head of the wife. That's a marriage relationship. The only place that governing system works, and must be adhered to, is in the marriage relationship. This does not say a woman cannot have administrative function in the business, that she can't handle different responsibilities or that every woman is responsible to be submissive to every man. No. It doesn't work that way. When she chooses a husband, when he—if I can put it that way—when he applies for the position of "husband," if she accepts him in that position, she also accepts what that position means. It means that he will be the head of that family and carry it out.

[59:34]

Does this statement mean—because it says *the man is the head of the wife*, does it mean the man has absolute authority over a woman? First of all, we have to understand that, again, it doesn't give man, in general, authority over woman, in general. That's not what it says. I still smile when I think about one of our students a number of years ago who said: "Well,"—you know, he was a single fellow among a number of other singles, and he said: "Well, if women are eventually supposed to submit to their husbands, wouldn't it be good for them to practice

right now?” Well, no, that’s not the relationship that exists right now. And there’s no responsibility to do that. And as I told him at the time, “You’re going to keep the Sabbath when it comes on Friday evening. Should you practice Sabbathing on Tuesday?” No. That isn’t the way it works. You keep the Sabbath when the Sabbath comes. You submit to a husband when you have a husband, and it’s not a responsibility before that.

But, we also keep in mind another passage which applies here as it does in every area of life.

Acts 5 verse 29 When the religious leaders tried to force the apostles to quit preaching the gospel, then the response that came from Peter was: ... *Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”*

That applies in a family too. If a husband were to instruct his wife to do something that is contrary to God, no, he doesn’t have the authority to do that. Headship in the family does not usurp the Headship of Jesus Christ or the Headship of God the Father. It is a headship within the family, **under** the rulership and guidance of Jesus Christ and God the Father.

At the same time, this passage does make it clear that there is an administrative structure within the family, and the husband does have the right, the duty, the accountability to lead his family. The fact that a husband is head over his wife simply means she has agreed to place him in a position in relation to her that no other human being can ever occupy. If she doesn’t have confidence that he will use that authority in a godly, loving, considerate way, she shouldn’t put him in that position. But, once she puts him in the position, neither one of them have the authority to redefine what God says the position will do. God is the one who determined that.

So Paul is establishing the foundation of understanding the answer to the question that’s coming. He begins with the realization that **all** of us—even Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church—have those who are over us in authority. Asserting our personal independence is not a part of being a Christian. All of us are accountable to those over us.

So he says in **[1 Corinthians 11] verse 4**: *Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.*

Now according to the commentaries, it was customary for the Greeks to cover their head when they were at the altars of the gods. The Romans didn’t normally do that. So there could be a question: “Well, is it appropriate or not?” But, again, it doesn’t really tell us quite the full sense of it there. In fact, when it talks about praying with the head covered, there’s probably more to it than that. In fact, we’ll see the covering that we’re talking about, where women are concerned, is not a hat or a veil, but hair. It appears that we would be talking about much the same thing here.

[1:03:22]

Now, as a custom—and I think it’s an appropriate custom—in our culture today, when a prayer is offered, a man always takes his hat off. He doesn’t pray with a hat on his head. He takes it off, and that’s a matter of showing respect. As I was growing up, I was taught that men don’t

wear hats indoors. Nowadays—doesn't seem to be that way. There are some people who seem to have a baseball cap tattooed on their head. But, culturally, it's generally been considered proper: take your hat off indoors. But we're talking here, not about hats; we're talking about praying. And, he also talks about "prophesying," speaking under inspiration—that a man should not do so with his head covered.

He goes on then in **verse 5**, and he says: *But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head (her husband), for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.*

Now, the women here are not leading prayers in services. They're not prophesying in the public worship service. So this goes beyond what's being done in services. Paul taught that women and men are equal before God, and that was, in many ways, a very revolutionary concept. The fact that they are equal before God does not change the basic God-given structure of the family. Submission to authority doesn't make us less important than the authority. It simply acknowledges the authority that God placed there.

The head, in the first century, was customarily shaved in mourning or in shame. An adulteress' hair was shaved off as a sign of disgrace. Now these Church women, as best we can tell, were not shaving their hair off, but they apparently didn't realize that by cropping their hair short, they looked like an adulteress and were bringing disgrace upon their husbands. Since longer hair was viewed as a sign of submission to her husband, for a woman to wear short hair was the same as saying she was not willing to be in submission to her husband, and that brought shame on him.

Well, that takes up the time that we have today, and we haven't finished the subject. But next time, as we move to **verse 6**, we're going to talk about four different hair lengths that are listed here, what can we learn from them, and what do they mean for us today?

Thank you for being with us for this class. We look forward to seeing you next time

[1:06:04]