

1 Corinthians Class 11 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online. We're going to be doing class number 11 in our series on Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians.

We did receive **one question** during class number 10, so we'd like to begin by answering that question.

In tonight's class, you mentioned that it is not a sin to marry an unconverted mate, but it is not a wise thing to do. However, elsewhere, Romans 14 verse 23, we are told that whatever is not of faith is sin. In Worldwide Church of God days, a person was put out for marrying an unconverted mate, treating such as a sin. Please explain.

Well, first of all I would say, Romans 14 verse 23 does not give members the ability to judge one another's faith. It makes the point that we are each accountable to God for the decisions that we make. It's intended to help each of us evaluate our own motives and to judge ourselves.

Faith is a personal matter. You don't have the ability to judge my faith, and I don't have the ability to judge yours. So Romans 14:23 does not mean that you and I can judge one another's decisions based on our faith.

If marrying outside the faith were a sin, Paul would not have addressed the subject in 1 Corinthians 7 of how to maintain a marriage with an unbelieving mate. Instead, he would've just told people, "It's sinful to be in that relationship, so you need to get out of it."

Admittedly, administration within the modern Church has not always been consistent, and that's probably true throughout time, but we do strive to make it that way. I certainly can't say that no one was ever removed from fellowship for marrying outside the faith. But I can categorically say: "It wasn't always done that way."

[2:17]

In a continuing effort to help us be able to administer properly, in November of 2014, the Ministerial Board of Directors approved the study paper called "Marrying Within the Faith." That paper's available to any members who would like to read it by going to the "Members" website, clicking on the "Education" tab and then selecting "Study Papers," and you'll find that paper listed. You can download it. You can read it there.

In the summary statement of that paper, it says this:

Some have dated and married outside the faith, believing they would be able to lead their nonmember mate to conversion. Of course, the Church does not prevent anyone from making his or her own decision for dating and marriage. And nonmembers are not shunned or mistreated by the Church. However, the ministry has always cautioned against trying to coerce and influence someone to come into the Church. God does the calling. (As we see in John 6 verse 44.) If a member chooses to marry outside the Church through a justice of the peace or similar civil servant, this is his or her choice. In such cases, the ministry would not need to take corrective action, such as suspension— (Oh, excuse me, let me read that again.)— In such cases, the ministry would need to take corrective action, such as suspension, only if the marriage causes disruption or division within the local congregation, either by the couple's words or actions.

So as you can see, our policy clearly says that, while we strongly discourage marrying outside the faith,

it is a personal decision, and it is not a sin.

Now, before we move into the next class, we certainly want God's blessing on our studies, so if you would please, bow your heads, and we'll ask God to bless our class today.

[Prayer]

[4:55]

This evening we'll be picking up where we left off last time at **chapter 8**, the beginning of **1 Corinthians chapter 8**. This is, to me, a fascinating section of the Scripture. It's a section that I personally didn't understand for a long time. I would read through this section, which is going to address the subject of food that has been offered to an idol—is it okay for a Christian to eat? And I would read through this, and I would see in **chapter 8** that Paul basically says: "An idol is nothing. It can't change the food, so it's not a problem."

And then I would read further, and I'd get into **chapter 10**, and basically, Paul says, "You probably shouldn't do it." And I would say: "Now, wait a minute. It sounds like Paul changed his mind between these two places. What happened?" And it took me a long time to realize that, though the question begins in the first part of **chapter 8**, Paul actually spends three chapters answering the question.

Now, again, I think we would often look at this and say: "Well, why did God preserve this?" I mean, the problem of eating food offered to idols is really not a big issue for me in my life. I don't face that.

A number of years ago I had a minister who is working—or talking with a minister, a friend, who was serving many of the brethren in southern Asia and India. And he said, "Well, it's true that for most people in this country it's not an issue, but quite honestly, for brethren in India, it's a daily issue because of the practices that are there." So I thought: "Well, okay, maybe God preserved it for that reason."

I also found out that it may be more of an issue than you and I realize. If you go, for example, to an Asian restaurant in this country and you smell incense coming from the kitchen, the chances are good there's a small altar back there set up and your food is being passed before that altar before it's brought to you. Now, again, is that an issue that's going to be of concern to a Christian? Is it something we would want to know about? Maybe you're one of those people who says: "Well, I don't ever go to an Asian restaurant. So I really don't have to worry about that."

That's fine, because the real issue here is a principle, a big principle, that comes back to our fundamental concept of: what is it that builds up? How do I make a decision where, whatever I do may be legal, but what is the best decision? How do I consider that? What are the things that I need to look at?

[7:45]

We're going to find as we go through these next three chapters, **8, 9** and **10**, that there are several places where we turn to pull out a lesson about this, or a lesson about that. **Chapter 9**, specifically, is going to talk about: should we have a paid ministry in the Church of God? And we can go to those passages, and look them up, and use them in that way. And that's fine; they're totally accurate.

But we may not have stopped to consider: "Why does Paul bring that up in the middle of a discussion about food offered to idols? What does that have to do with me?" And quite honestly, I am so impressed as I go through this with the wisdom that Paul was given by God to be able to address a

principle that you and I still need very much today. So, let's consider what we're dealing with here.

I want to—there's a very good introduction in *William Barclay's Daily Study Bible*, and I don't want to take the time to read all of it, but I would like to read just a little bit to give a sense of what the brethren in Corinth were facing. And, quite honestly, it also will have an impact when you go through **Romans chapter 14** and the subject comes up, really again, in that same place. And in that case, it led to people deciding to be vegetarian for spiritual reasons. And Paul says that's not a legitimate reason.

So, let's see what we're dealing with here. *Barclay* tells us:

Sacrifice to the gods was an integral part of ancient life. It might be of two kinds, private or public. In neither case was the whole animal consumed upon the altar. Often all that was burned was a mere token part as small as some of the hairs cut from the forehead.

In private sacrifice the animal was divided into three parts. First, a token part was burned on the altar. Second, the priests received as their rightful portion the ribs, the ham and the left side of the face.

[9:49]

Now, this is talking about pagan sacrifice. That's not the way God had it for His people, but nonetheless, this is what we're dealing with in Corinth.

Third, the worshipper himself received the rest of the meat. With the meat he gave a banquet. This was specially the case at times like weddings. Sometimes these feasts were in the house of the host; sometimes they were even in the temple of the god to whom the sacrifice had been made. We have, for instance, a papyrus invitation to dinner which runs like this: "Antonius, son of Ptolemaeus, invites you to dine with him at the table of our Lord Serapis." Serapis was the god to whom he had sacrificed.

The problem which confronted the (Corinthian) Christian was, could he take part in such a feast? Could he possibly take upon his lips meat that had been offered to an idol? If he could not, then obviously he was going to cut himself off almost entirely from social occasions.

In public sacrifice, (that was talking about private sacrifice) that is sacrifice offered by the state, and such sacrifices were common. After the requisite symbolic amount of the meat had been burned and after the priests had received their share, the rest of the meat fell to the magistrates and others. What they did not need they sold to the shops and the markets; and therefore, even when meat was bought in the shops, it might well have been already offered to some idol. A man never knew when he might be eating meat that had formed part of a sacrifice to an idol.

In the old *King James*, I believe, it refers to "the shambles," and that was a reference to this kind of meat market.

What complicated matters still further was that this age believed strongly and fearfully in demons and devils. The air was full of them, and they were always lurking to gain an entry into a man, and if they did, they would injure his body and unhinge his mind. One of the special ways in which these spirits gained entry was through food; they settled on the food as a man ate and so got inside him. One of the ways of avoiding that was to dedicate the meat to some good god whose presence in the meat put up a barrier against the evil spirit. For this reason, nearly all animals were dedicated to a god before being slaughtered; and if that was not done, as a defense, meat

was blessed in the name of a god before it was eaten.

So it gives you an idea of what people were thinking.

[12:25]

Now probably to most of us that sounds so very strange. But please understand that you're probably viewing this, as I do, from what is essentially a Christian perspective, the perspective of people who believe in one God and would not be offering their food to idols. But please understand that the vast majority of the world does not view things in that way. If you were to go to an area, for example, in India, where the Hindu belief is the most common, there are hundreds of gods. And, they believe the gods inhabit trees and rocks and all kinds of things. You would find this kind of thing—the offering of food to them—as being very common. You would find that if you—there are some places, for example, there may be a sacred tree, and people come and put food offerings there. Most people have altars to their favorite gods in their homes and would offer food offerings there. We'll find a number of examples of this.

Paul begins by saying, **verse 1 of chapter 8**: *Now concerning things offered to idols*: —

Okay, this is a question. Paul isn't just throwing it up here in the midst of all of his discussion. Remember the brethren in Corinth had asked questions, and Paul is answering their question.

—*concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.* (Or, as we might put it: builds up.)

Okay. Now does Paul say there's something wrong with knowledge? No. But he is telling us that knowledge by itself can make us feel we have more understanding than we really do. Knowledge can make a person arrogant. We've probably, all of us at some point or another, encountered some individual who felt superior to others because of his or her knowledge they have. This can be true even in the Church. There can be people who begin to think that they're superior to other Christians because their knowledge of Scripture, their knowledge of history, is superior.

So Paul is saying: "Okay, when it comes to food offered to idols—when it comes to idols, we all have knowledge. None of us would believe that an idol was something we should have." The Scripture is clear on that. We don't worship idols; we don't have them in our homes; we don't bow down before them; we don't see an idol as representative of God. We all have that knowledge. Okay. But Paul is telling us: "Knowledge alone isn't enough. Knowledge can puff you up, but love builds up."

This is going to understandably be a real issue within the Church. Some would maintain that the knowledge of the truth shows us that there are no other gods, and, that there is no way another god could pollute the food, so it's okay to eat it. Others would maintain that since the unconverted believe in these other gods, if they saw us eating the food, they would think we were serving and worshiping their god. So, both have knowledge, but what knowledge do we use? Do we use the knowledge of what the other people are thinking, or do we use the knowledge of what we know to be true? Which one should guide our decision-making? What should we do in a case like this?

[16:29]

Again, he says *we all have knowledge*.

Now, I wanted to just illustrate a couple of quick illustrations here of food being offered to an idol. These are pictures from Hindu. You see all of these things—this is a very typical celebration in the Hindu

world where you see all of these foods being offered to idols.

Oh, wait, I'm sorry. This one [an image] is not Hindu. This is Roman Catholic, and the symbolism there is not a Hindu god, but another god. So, it's interesting to see the parallel there, that honestly, when we talk about this being done in the pagan world, it isn't just there.

Paul says we've all learned by experience. That's kind of the sense of the word *knowledge* that's here. We've all learned by experience. And the phrase here about having *knowledge* may very well be a quote from the letter that the Corinthians had sent to Paul.

But we might also remember something—that experience teaches different things to different people, the way that you approach things. It's sometimes been said that some people have 20 years of experience, and some people have one year of experience 20 times. We don't really learn from the experience; we just keep going through it. The mere knowledge that there is nothing wrong with it can inflate a person to a level of a false sense of security and indifference about these things.

We should recognize that Scripture frequently connects eating food offered to idols with sexual immorality.

Notice **Revelation 2** and **verse 14**: *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

Those two things were connected. And we look at the story of Balaam and his teaching of Balak how to seduce the Israelites into immorality and worship of other gods, which would bring God's punishment upon them. It involved both the sacrifice to idols, which was a time of festivity. It was a time of joyous celebration, a time of abundance. Again, when you think about an animal being sacrificed and you having the meat available, today we have refrigeration. We have meat available to us all the time. We can have meat every day if we desire to do it. But in the first century world, and certainly back in the time of Israel, obviously those conveniences didn't exist. Meat was something that had to be eaten up in a very short period of time, or it would go bad. Meat was not a part of the daily diet. So, having meat available was a special time, a celebration. And when you sacrificed it to the idols, that was a celebration. And connected with that very often was the sexual immorality.

[19:46]

Drop down just a little further to **Revelation chapter 2** and **verse 20**, where again we read:

Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

So we see here that there was a very great concern, that there was a connection here. That we talk about food offered to idols—there is more involved to it, Paul is telling us, than simply whether the idol is anything or not, and it was important to understand. Today, sometimes when we look at a principle here, people can often say they see no harm in participating in some kind of a pagan practice because the pagan gods don't really exist.

Many of us remember that years ago when the Church used to teach about Christmas and Easter, that one of the first things we said—one of our articles—was "Christmas is Pagan." And we would talk about that aspect of it. And when people were told: "Well, do you realize that the customs involved in

Christmas or Easter were pagan customs?” —many people would be appalled. And they would say: “Well, no, I don’t want to do that.”

Today, when you tell people that they’re pagan customs, they look at you like: “Yeah. What’s your point?” They don’t mind doing pagan things. They **know** they’re pagan things. Every year when we approach these seasons, there are news articles, magazine articles, Internet articles, that talk about how all of these pagan connections are there. And most people read it and think: “Yeah, that’s right. That’s where it comes from. No big deal.”

So, society has changed a great deal. People don’t see a problem with being involved in those things that were very clearly pagan. Now, of course, you can go to a ridiculous extreme. Pagans ate meals. Is it wrong for us to eat meals? Well, of course not. Pagans wore clothes. Do we have to go around naked because pagans wore clothes? Of course not; that’s ridiculous. We’re talking about methods of worship, and those things, God says, are offensive.

But people today very often don’t seem to think there’s anything wrong with it. False religion worships a false god and a false Jesus Christ. If we use the same methods to worship the true God and the true Jesus, aren’t we doing the same thing? Aren’t we adapting those methods which God says are offensive to Him to try to serve God? And again, God certainly is not pleased with that. And, Paul is making the point that we should follow as well.

[22:40]

He goes on to say, [**1 Corinthians 8**] **verse 2**: *And if anyone thinks that he knows anything—*

Okay, we’re back to knowledge.

—anyone thinks he knows anything, he (really) knows nothing yet as he ought to—

You see, it’s very easy for us to think we have knowledge when what we have is really very, very partial knowledge. I see more and more of that today because of all of the inaccuracies you find in social media and places that we normally would go to look things up. We always have to be extremely careful about what our sources are. We know that there are people who believe all kinds of strange things because if you go on the Internet, you can find somebody that believes just about anything. And you can quote them as your source. But, we need to be very careful that we don’t think that we have **full** knowledge just because we have **some** knowledge. In fact, one of the great benefits of education is teaching us what we don’t know, helping us to recognize how much there is yet to learn.

So Paul goes on, as he said there: don’t think you have all knowledge because you have some. But he says, again in contrast:

Verse 3 *But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.*

God can continue to give us guidance if we have that love of God, if that guides us, rather than simply *knowledge* by itself.

So, Paul goes on in **verse 4**, and he says: *Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.* (There’s just the one true God, and that’s the one that we serve.)

It’s interesting, I think, in a sense, Paul kind of begins by saying: “Okay, when we talk about knowledge, let’s stop and consider for a moment, exactly what is it that we know? Well, we know that an idol is

nothing. It's an image; it's a piece of wood; it's a piece of stone; it's a piece of metal. And that's all it is. It has no life. There's nothing in it—we recognize that." And therefore, he says that this is what we know, *an idol is nothing in this world*.

It's kind of interesting—this is one of the commentaries. It says:

The emphasis here is on the nothingness of the idol... It is a mere stock, or stone, having no real significance in heaven or on earth. One of the Old Testament names for heathen gods is *elilim*, which means "nothings."

That's one of the terms that was used to describe the pagan gods—"nothings!" Obviously, a derogatory term.

[25:23]

So Paul is saying: "We know an idol is **nothing** in the world, and that there is **no** other God but one. That's it. There are no others." Now again, put this in the context of the pagan world where these people believed in **hundreds** of gods. It's said that no one even knows how many different gods the Egyptians worshiped. Or, for that matter, in Hinduism there is virtually no limit on the number of gods. People don't just worship one; they worship several.

Then he makes an odd statement that, again, some would kind of stumble over.

Paul says: **verse 4** *...there is no other God but one.* **5** *For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),*

What is Paul saying? He said: "We don't believe there's any *God but one*, but, well, even if I'm wrong, and there are some others..." No. That's not what Paul is saying. He says: *even if*—again, the phrase here—*there are so-called gods*, or, "if they're being called gods," —*even if* these other things, these other beings, in a sense, because he's going to show us that there are spirit beings behind much of this—*even if they're called gods*, they're not. And, *whether they are in heaven or on earth*, because there are many things that are called gods, that were worshiped as gods, by the people.

Verse 6 *yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.*

So when we say that *all things* are of God, He is the ultimate source of all that exists—wouldn't exist without God. He has decreed it would exist. He sustains it. And, the agent of creation, which is shown in other places as well, is Jesus Christ. He is the one that God used to do the creating. This is one of the reasons why we say that, when we look in the Old Testament and it talks about God, in many cases what it's referring to is the one who became Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He was the agent of the creation. He was the member of the Godhead that did the actual creating process in full conjunction with the Father. But He was the agent that God the Father used in that process, so both are necessary. God the Father is the source. Jesus Christ is the agent who brings all of this into existence, and we, certainly, should recognize that.

[28:09]

But then Paul says: "Now, though this is our knowledge..."

Remember, we said, "What do we know? What do you and I know?" Regardless of what other people say about gods, or things that they worship, or things they call "god," you and I know there is one God,

the Father, and there is one God, the Son, Jesus Christ. It is one God who is the Father and the Son. We recognize that.

But Paul says: **verse 7** *However, there is not in everyone that knowledge;—*

Wait a minute—we're looking at knowledge. What do we know? "But not everyone shares that same knowledge." How does that affect us?

—for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

Now, what's it telling us here? The conscience is an amazing thing that God created in us. Animals don't, apparently, have conscience; they don't have that ability to feel in those ways. The conscience is in many ways a "spiritual warning system." The conscience tells us when things are wrong. The conscience can also encourage us when we've done the right thing and others may not understand us. But the conscience exists as it is educated. We're not **born** with a conscience that understands right and wrong; that's not there. A conscience is educated.

We could easily give examples of people in, let's say, primitive cultures where their conscience is educated in a very, very different way. I think, for example, even in our history in this country there was a tribe of Indians called the Comanches. And when you understand their culture, being able to capture their enemies and slowly torture them to death was a part of something they considered "good." Now that's a poorly educated conscience. That's not a right conscience. But that was their culture. That's what they were taught to believe, that that was a good thing to do.

People are not born with an educated conscience, but we educate it over a lifetime. But when that conscience has been educated in a certain way, even when new knowledge comes along, it can take us a while to make that adjustment.

[30:33]

I remember a gentleman telling me years ago—probably goes back to the late 1950s or early 60s—that he was accepted as a student at Ambassador College in Pasadena. He had come from a background—I believe it was Amish or Mennonite, something along those lines—where alcohol was strictly forbidden. But when he began to understand the truth, he realized that God showed the moderate and responsible use of alcohol was permissible for an adult. So, he knew that was acceptable.

As he was on his journey to Pasadena to become a freshman student, he stopped in one particular Church area for the Sabbath. And of course, the Church brethren, being as they normally are, invited him over for dinner, and the host offered him a glass of wine. And he talked about what a struggle it was, because his mind told him: "This is perfectly proper." His conscience was still saying: "Ahhh, that's not right. You shouldn't do that." And it took him a while for that conscience to be reeducated in the right way. That could apply in a lot of different ways, but I see this as an illustration.

What happens when someone was called from that pagan world where they believed in all of these gods and goddesses? The idols were representative—in fact, in some cases they believed that the god lived within that idol, that when you set up this idol in your home in a little altar, that god himself, or goddess herself, was living there, would dwell in that spot. And then you come to the truth, and your mind tells you: "There's only one God." But that conscience takes a while to be educated. I think that's what Paul is talking about here, that there is, for some people—they were used to this. It was a long

habit prior to conversion. And now to see somebody just eating food that was offered to an idol is something that their conscience just said, “Oh, wait, that’s just—I don’t feel right about that.”

So Paul is saying: “Okay, what about those individuals? You have a certain knowledge that there is only one God, and that’s good. You’re right. There is only one God. But, not everyone fully understands that, and their conscience may be weakened if they see you doing something in that way. They may, even in a sense, think, “Well, I guess eating things offered to these other gods is not a problem.” So they had become so accustomed to the idols and their meat that now to eat meat like that—wow, they still think of it as something sacrificed to the idol.

[33:24]

Paul goes on to say: [1 **Corinthians 8:8**] *But food does not commend us to God;—*

Now, one of the side points I would keep in mind: this has nothing to do with clean and unclean foods. We’re not talking about clean and unclean foods; we’re talking about food *offered to idols*. Okay? So that’s the issue here. The word that’s used is *brōma*, which means “food” in general, not meat.

Verse 8 ... *food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.*

Paul is setting aside, as one commentary puts it, the “pride of knowledge” —the enlightened ones who say: “Well, I know that there’s no god there, so it’s okay for me.” Well, the fact that you think it’s okay to eat it doesn’t make you better before God. And the person who kind of has, I guess we would say, the “pride of prejudice,” that: “No, you can’t do that kind of thing; that’s evil; that’s wrong” —Paul sets that aside too. He said: “No, this isn’t a matter of your relationship to God. Choosing to eat it or not, that by itself isn’t a spiritual issue.” But, as he goes on to say: “There may be a spiritual component here that you do need to consider.”

He says, **verse 9**: *But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.*

Oh, could that be? You recognize you have a certain liberty, and it creates a problem. It causes others to stumble. So, he said: “You have this right; you have the right to do something, but what’s best? Could it be a stumbling block, something that causes someone else to stumble?”

Notice what Paul wrote in **Romans 14** and **verse 13**. He says: *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.*

Oh. So knowledge tells me that the idol is nothing, and eating the food that was offered to an idol—there’s no god; there’s nothing there. It can’t pollute the food. If the food is clean food and God permits me by His law to eat it, then there’s nothing wrong with my eating it. It’s legal. But does it build up? Does it edify? If I have a brother who stumbles spiritually—maybe because they lack a certain amount of knowledge—okay, that’s not sinful. Lack of knowledge is not a sin. That’s not some evil thing about them. They haven’t come to that point yet. Then, how do I make a decision that doesn’t offend my brother?

[36:23]

Paul says: “I need to *resolve not to put a stumbling block or cause to fall in my brother’s way.*”

What if you dealt with someone who came from a background where the use of alcohol was strictly

forbidden? Would you perhaps decide: “You know, this is a newer person. They haven’t really come to fully embrace this yet. I know it’s legal for me to enjoy an alcoholic beverage, but, you know, if I do that, it may be a problem for this person. Maybe I should just refrain. Maybe I should not do that.”

I literally had that happen to me one time. I was dealing with a new person, and we had discussed the subject. We talked about it. We explained what the Scripture said. They understood that, and they came to a Church activity, and there were probably 150 of us there. And we were relaxing and enjoying the day, and I was having a beer. I had about half a beer that day. And I was talking to the person, knowing that we had discussed the subject, and nothing was said. It seemed to be fine. We had a normal discussion.

The person never came to Church again. I felt very badly about it. When I finally got in touch with them, they said: “No. When I saw you there drinking that beer, I just thought, ‘I can’t do this.’” I felt very badly. I thought we had already covered the subject. But in that case, no, they stumbled. And I never saw them or heard from them again. Don’t know whatever happened with them. But it made me feel very badly because I probably should have been a little more sensitive to that, even though I knew we had discussed the subject. I needed to be more careful, and it made me be more careful from that point forward.

Now this can apply in a lot of different ways, and again in this case, the food offered to an idol. You went to the marketplace, and you bought your meat, and you didn’t really know what its background was. Had it been offered? You just didn’t really know. We’ll see as we go further what God expects of us. But probably not fully in this chapter; we’ll have to go further.

Let’s go on here to **1 Corinthians 8 verse 10**. *For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? (Even though he still sees them as representing these supernatural powers.)*

So Paul’s first focus in this decision is on the impact we have on a brother who may be weaker. We’re not judging him for being weaker; we’re just acknowledging he may not have this. Now, later on in **chapter 10**, he’s going to address: “Should we partake of these practices at all?” But right now, first of all, he’s saying: “Stop and think about your brother. What’s the impact?”

[39:22]

Now, would you go into an idol’s temple and eat? Probably most of us would not want to do that; we would not feel that we could. **But**, what Paul is saying is: “The knowledge tells you there’s nothing there; it’s just an idol, and therefore it can’t be defiled. But most of us would feel pretty reluctant walking into an idol’s temple to do that.” You might apply that in some other ways as well.

There are situations where we may be invited to participate in something which we might know is, at its core, something that’s pagan or inappropriate. And yet, well, should we be a part of that? You know, would we go to a Christmas party knowing that this was something that was celebrating something we believe to be wrong. I think most of us would say, “Well, no, that’s not appropriate.” Would we go and have a meal with our family—unbelievers—who were keeping Christmas at that time? Well, we’d probably look at that situation and say: “Okay, what’s involved?” In many cases they’d be very respectful of us, and they would do their gift giving and all of that thing separate, and the meal would just be simply a meal. We might feel comfortable with that, and other situations we might not. We’ll see again as we go further.

But he's saying: "If the person who is weak sees you doing something that they **believe** to be not proper, then you're harming them, and you have to consider that."

Verse 11 *And because of your knowledge—* (the knowledge that puffs up)

—because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

Again, put this in perspective. We've just read this back at the end of **chapter 7** about *you are bought with a price*. You belong to Jesus Christ. It's His shed blood, His giving of His life that purchased you. And now here is your brother and His shed blood purchased him too, and, you're treating him carelessly as if—even though he's weak. Just again, when we talk about "weak," don't think of that as "spiritually inferior." Think of it like an infant. An infant's weak, and we don't somehow treat the infant badly because it's weak. We expect infants to be weak; of course they are. And we should expect our newer, younger brothers and sisters to have certain weaknesses as well. And we have a duty to consider that. I can't let my **knowledge** cause my brother or sister to perish.

Verse 12 He says: *But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, —* (He acknowledges the conscience is weak.)

But when you...wound their weak conscience you sin against Christ.

It's a serious matter to offend a brother, to cause a brother or sister to stumble because of the things that we allow ourselves to do. That's a very serious matter, and Jesus Christ [Paul] says: "When you do that, don't just look at them. You're sinning against Jesus Christ."

[42:40]

Remember what Jesus Christ said in **Matthew 25** and **verse 40**: *And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

That's the way Jesus Christ sees each of his brothers and sisters. That's the way He sees all of us, and we need to see each other in that way too.

So, he says, [**1 Corinthians 8:13**] *Therefore if food—*

Any kind of food. And we're back to *brōma*. We're not talking about clean and unclean.

We're saying: *if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, (And that is meat there, krea.) lest I make my brother stumble.*

"If I have to give this up to keep from offending my brother, well, all right, then I'll give it up. I will do without." That should be my approach: "Now, wait a minute. Knowledge said there's nothing wrong with it. But love says, even if I have to give it up, I will, because I want to build up my brother." That's important! The law says: "I can eat this food," but, is that the best decision? I have a weak brother nearby. "Well," he says, "I better be willing to give up whatever it takes."

If I live with someone—perhaps you have a mate who, let's say, has been an alcoholic. The term we refer to today is a "recovering alcoholic," and I **highly** respect those individuals who are, as we would call them, "recovering alcoholics." They have been addicted to a very powerful substance, and they have brought that under control, and they continue day after day to resist a pull which most of us don't feel at all. But they've done it **faithfully**, and they should be respected.

I had a man, one time, come to me after a Church service where I had mentioned something about alcohol, and he showed me a coin that said “25.” And it was his 25-year coin, given to him because he had been sober for 25 years! I have to say, I highly respected that man. There was a story that went with it, but I’m saying, we should respect those individuals.

[45:07]

But what if you’re married to someone like that? Then, what you do? God says: “You don’t have a problem; you can drink.” But what would you do because of your mate? I think most of us would immediately say: “Well, I’ll give up alcohol. I can live my life without that to make it easier for my mate, for my friend, who’s struggling with this problem.” You go out after services with someone for a meal, and you know someone’s had that problem in the past. Okay, respect that.

I had a situation recently where I was in a place where there were several others who were drinking a toast to a particular individual, and there was one person in the group who said: “No, thank you; I don’t want anything.” We had to respect that, and I think we all did. But that’s what it’s saying here. You have to give up things sometimes—not because knowledge tells you, you must, but because love tells you, you must.

So let’s go on and see where Paul goes forward here. Again remember, the chapter and verse divisions are artificial, so what does Paul say here as we move to **chapter 9**?

1 Corinthians 9:1 He says: *Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?*

In other words, Paul is saying, “Okay”—he’s not introducing really a new subject here, but he’s giving four rhetorical questions. He’s asking these things, and they are an outgrowth of what he’s just said in **chapter 8**: “Well, I will give up the meat if I need to, if it offends my brother. But wait a minute! I am an apostle and the highest human authority in the Church! I’m an apostle! I’m free! I am freed from that wrong way of living, and I’m no longer enslaved. I’ve seen Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Now most of us couldn’t say that directly, but Paul could. Jesus Christ had instructed him. And he said: “You, all of you, you’re evidence of the fact that God is backing me in doing this work; you’re there. I have all of this.”

And he goes on to say, in **verse 2**: *If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.*

So he said: “Okay, now, maybe there are those who say, ‘Well, apostle, yeah, you can claim that office, but you know you weren’t right there with Jesus Christ.’ Yes, that’s true; I wasn’t with the original 12. I wasn’t a part of that group, but I am an apostle. Jesus Christ has placed me in that office.” And basically what he says to the people of Corinth is: “Even if other people don’t recognize that office, you should, because you’re the proof of it.”

[47:58]

Apostle, remember, means “one who is sent by one in authority, bearing a specific message to a specific audience and carrying with him a degree of the authority of the one who sends him.”

Paul says: “That’s what I did for you. I came with a message to you from Jesus Christ, bearing the authority that He sends with me. And, as you see, you look around you, and you see that you’re called from this world, you’re a different person, you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. What proof do I

need beyond that, that I really am an apostle of Jesus Christ?" So he said: "I'm saying this—I'm an apostle. If nobody else recognizes that, you do. You're the seal of that."

So he says [**1 Corinthians 9:3**]: *My defense to those who examine me—*

There are those who are criticizing Paul, who were saying he was taking too much on himself.

My defense to those who examine me is this: 4 Do we have no right to eat and drink?

Okay, now he's probably going to be talking about his role in the ministry as we go a little further here, but he's talking about having his physical needs met. "Do I have no right to be supported"—as we'll see as we go further—"by the tithes and offerings of the Church? Don't I have a right to have my physical needs met by the Church because of the work that I'm doing?"

He says, **verse 5**: *Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? (Cephas, again, being an Aramaic name for Peter.)*

Peter was married. We understand that. Even though that's not a part of Roman Catholic teaching, Scripture tells us very clearly that Peter had a wife. And apparently, though there is no passage that tells us that his wife traveled with him, apparently she must have. And perhaps some of the other apostles took their believing mates with them.

Now, we've been doing the International Leadership Programs, and the administration of the Church has gone to present these programs to help the leadership grow in many of these areas around the world, and in virtually every case, the wives have gone along too. Now they don't stand up and do presentations, but their presence is a tremendous help. It unifies; it strengthens. It shows the women of the Church: "You're important too. This isn't just a man's church. You're converted Christians. You are equals in the calling and in the hope that we have. The wives are very important. So I certainly would not be surprised to learn that Peter's wife went with him, or when James traveled, or some of the others who were involved, that their wives went with them.

[50:59]

But Paul's point here is: "Don't I have a right to do that? And if I took my wife with me, would I not be able to use their tithes and offerings to be able to meet her expenses too?" And again, as he says, "This is what *the other apostles* do, *the brothers of the Lord* and Peter do these things, so don't I have that *right* as well?"

1 Corinthians 9:6 *Or (he says) is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?*

And there were people evidently who were saying: "Okay, you can come here, but we don't think you should be supported by tithes and offerings. We think you should work to support yourself." And there are people I've come across through the years who think that the Church should not have a paid ministry, that the minister should go outside and do other jobs and support themselves, and care for the Church on the side. Well, I can say that we've tried that.

There was a period of time, a number of years ago back in the late 90s, when there were about 30 of us who were told that we would need to go out and get other jobs—our congregations were smaller—and we would need to go out and get other jobs and support ourselves and take care of the churches with our spare time. Well, we tried that. And, I was blessed to be in an area where jobs were not hard to come up with, and I did that for two years, and I can tell you, the Church was neglected. I was not able to serve the Church adequately during that period of time.

I know of another minister who, likewise, was doing the same thing—a very faithful minister who did his best to serve God’s people, but would work all week long. And you had to work a 40-hour week. You couldn’t just go kind of part-time as a greeter at Walmart; you had to do something more to be able to meet the limited income that we had. We were on half salary—I should add that. But to make up for that difference, you had to work full-time. And he would go out and work all week long, and when he came in on Friday evening, he was so exhausted, there was simply no way for him to prepare a sermon for the next day. So he would go to bed as early as possible, and then he would get up at 4 o’clock in the morning on the Sabbath to put together a message for the brethren.

Now again, he’s a very faithful minister. He did his very best to serve. I have a great deal of respect for him, but I know very well he would say that God’s people were not adequately served during that period of time. No, we’ve learned by experience that we need to have a ministry that is full-time serving God’s people. And, we recognize that is the best way for it to be carried out. So this certainly backs that up.

[53:49]

But, you remember in the book of Acts, when Paul came to an area, many times he would work to support himself and those who were with him. We’re told he was a tentmaker, which may have included leather work and a number of other things that they did at that point, but he would work to support himself. This took place in Corinth; this is what Paul did when he came to Corinth. He worked with Priscilla and Aquila, if you remember the story in the book of Acts, **until** there was an offering that came from Philippi. And when that came, Paul went back to full-time preaching the gospel and serving the brethren in the Church.

It appears—and it’s difficult to say for sure—but it appears that Paul established a personal policy. He would not take tithes and offerings in support of his own needs from whatever individuals he was serving at the time. He took the tithes and offerings that came from Philippi. They were eager to support him in doing the work, and that was fine. But he was concerned that if he took the tithes and offerings from the people in Corinth, while he’s serving them, then some people might begin to think he was doing it just to receive their tithes and offerings, instead of it being a genuine work that he was doing. So he evidently didn’t take from them at that time. And that appears to be a pattern that Paul followed throughout his ministry. Our situation is very different today. Each local minister has no idea what tithes and offerings come from his area. In fact, if he were to ask, “How much tithe and offering comes from my area?” he would not be told. That’s confidential information. So we don’t have the same situation today.

Now I don’t want to get off on that because, quite honestly, that’s not really Paul’s point. Paul is saying: “I have the right to this.”

He goes on to explain, [**1 Corinthians 9**] **verse 7**: *Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?*

This is something that’s expected. *The laborer is worthy of his hire.* We’ll see that as we go further.

He said: **8** *Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?*

In other words, he said: “Okay, this is logical. But, even beyond logic, doesn’t the law of God say this?” And he goes on to quote from **Deuteronomy 25** and **verse 4**.

But he puts it here, in **verse 9**: *For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it*

treads out the grain.”—

[56:27]

So in other words, it was an instruction that was given anciently, that while the ox is pulling the drag and beating out the grain, that it's okay for the ox to bend down and get a bite himself. You didn't muzzle him in that way. But, now Paul makes another point that's very important.

He said, [**1 Corinthians 9:9**] —*Is it oxen God is concerned about?*

Did God give this law because He really has this thing about oxen? And he goes on to answer.

Verse 10 *Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.*

So this is the way it's written. This is the way it's intended to be.

So he goes on to say: **11** *If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*

Should it be a problem to you if we bring you these precious spiritual truths and then we use your tithes and offerings to live on so that we can be there when you need us to be there?

We might tie in with this **Galatians 6** and **verse 6**, which says: *Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.*

This is the principle. This is what we're supposed to do.

So Paul says: [**1 Corinthians 9:12**] *If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?*—

In other words, “If you allow others to do that, shouldn't we likewise be able to do this?”

And then he says something very important: —*Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.*

He said: “Yes, I have a right to be supported by your tithes and offerings. The law allows that; God's word allows that; I am perfectly within my rights to do it, and I'm not doing it. It's legal. But knowing you, it wouldn't build you up. It would create problems.”

As William Ramsey wrote a little over a century ago:

The most sensitive part of the human anatomy is the pocketbook.

The people were very sensitive, and Paul said, “I'm afraid that if I took your tithes and offerings, even though God allows me to, I'm afraid it might be a stumbling block. It might hinder you.”

[59:08]

He goes on to say, **verse 13**: *Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?*

This is the way it was done at the temple in Jerusalem, at the tabernacle, originally. There was a portion that was given to those who were responsible for doing the service. So Paul says: “There's a principle there that you should see, that involves all of us.”

Even so (**verse 14**) the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

That's what we're told. Jesus Christ said, in **Matthew 10 verse 10**, when He sent out the disciples, He said: "Don't take a *bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.*" You should be supplied by those that you're serving.

Likewise, in **Luke 10 verse 7**, He talked about going into a home when you're invited, and He said: *remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages.*

This is a principle that God teaches. And Paul is saying: "This is what I've done."

He says, [**1 Corinthians 9**] **verse 15**: *But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me (I'm not going to begin taking your tithes and offerings.); for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.*

I don't want something to hinder this in any way.

Verse 16 *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*

"Well, it's a responsibility I have. I'm not doing it to get something from you. And I don't want anybody to think that I am. I'm doing it out of the responsibility that's been placed upon me."

He says: **17** *For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have (still) been entrusted with a stewardship.*

"I've been given a responsibility to do this whether I want to or not, and I am going to faithfully carry it out."

Well, I'm going to have to stop there because, again, we've run out of time for this particular class. We'll pick up in class 12 next time, and we'll go on from **verse 18** of this chapter.

But keep in mind the principle Paul is showing here. His subject is not: Should we have a paid ministry in the Church? His subject is: All things are lawful for me, but not all things build up, and I must conduct my life according to what builds up. Hope we all can think about that as we prepare for the next class.

Thanks for joining us. Look forward to seeing you next time.

[1:02:00]