

What Matters Most

Theological triage (10:31-11:1)

First Order Priorities → Trinity, Salvation by Faith, Deity of Christ, etc.

Second Order Priorities → A missing layer that leads to maturity!

Third Order Priorities → End times, predestination, belief about baptism, communion, spiritual gifts, etc.

Paul has three concerns which govern his life

The worship of God alone through faith in his son, Jesus Christ

Brotherly Christian love

Bringing unbelievers to faith and understanding

A Test Case for Maturity: Food Sacrificed to Idols

The problem: the “strong” believers demanding their rights

Certain members of the Corinthian church wanted to exercise their right to eat food sacrificed to idols.

Their argument was “All of us possess knowledge” that “an idol has no real existence” and “there is no God but one.”

The danger: some people might go back to idols

vs. 7 – “Not all possess knowledge.”

If they were formerly idol worshippers, they may actually participate in idol worship and thus you brought your brother back into false worship.

Paul’s solution:

LOVE GOD – 10:14-21 “Flee from idolatry.” And “Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”

This meant not attending pagan feasts.

LOVE YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER IN CHRIST – 8:13 “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”

This meant not eating meat sacrificed to idols in the presence of anyone offended by it.

LIVE FOR UNBELIEVERS TO UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL – 9:22 “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might win some.”

This meant giving up any right for the lost, or doing anything to make the Gospel understood.

A Deeper Look at Idolatry

About idol worship

1 Corinthians 10:19-21 *“What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”*

Charles Hodge: “We must understand the apostle as saying that on the one hand the gods of the heathen were imaginary beings, and on the other, that their sacrifices were really offered to evil spirits.”

Charles Hodge: “The effect of idol worship is separate from its intention. The question is not what they meant to do, but what they did. A person who puts his hand in the fire burns his hand whether he intends to or not.”

Warning! It’s not the intent, but the action, that produces the consequences.

A Challenge: Will You Give Up Your Rights?

Paul surrenders his rights

8:13 → The right to eat what he wants.

9:3 → The right to a wife.

9:4,6-14 → The right to be paid for ministry.

“The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living from the gospel.”

9:1,19 → The right to be free to be himself.

Bringing the Gospel to Unbelievers

1 Corinthians 9:23 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Questions for Personal Study

1. What are the three main concerns of Paul, and how do they point us toward maturity?
2. How does this passage show us that being “right” isn’t as important as loving one another?
3. How does your life make the gospel understandable to unbelievers?
4. Are there any rights that God is calling you to give up?