

Parson to Person

SUNDAY'S WRITTEN MESSAGE

ROMANS 14 PART 10 – ROMANS 15 PART 3

“Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. 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. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), 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. However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; 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. But 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. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s

temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1 Corinthians 8:1–13 NKJV).

“...my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. Or do

we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for 'the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness.'

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. But 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; for 'the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness.' 'Conscience,' I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:14–33 NKJV).

The Scriptures are filled with commands relating to what a believer should do and those things a believer should avoid. There are also things the Scriptures omit. Omissions are not left off by avoidance, but rather, for a variety of reasons. One reason may be the fact that principles can be found in Scripture that are easily applied to specific liberties or prohibitions. For example, the application of the law of love will prevent one from doing anything that harms a brother or sister. Other reasons might include things that were non-contemporary to the author's time frame—for example, the use of a firearm, or going to a motion picture, etc. Any number of reasons could be given for why the Scriptures are silent on certain things. Believers who care to consider their decisions, be they freedoms, liberties, or limitations, are given plenty of Biblical insight into all that pertains to life and godliness.

The Scriptures clearly declare that a believer, once born again, is in no danger of eternal fire or separation from God. We are kept secure by the Lord. Therefore, one might suggest that a believer can live any way he or she wishes, citing "*all things are lawful for me.*" However, inasmuch, the Scriptures also declare "*not all things are helpful*"

and *“not all things edify.”* Therefore, believers recognize a call away from licentious living and to righteousness in the present age—we are called to walk in love!

To this end Paul wrote about food, wine, Sabbath keeping, etc. in Romans 14. The issues weighed heavily upon the Jews—wine being the exception. However, when dealing with food sacrificed to idols we must consider both Jew and Gentile.

As mentioned above, Paul did not tell the believer that eating food sacrificed to an idol was sinful or that one might forfeit salvation for doing so. We are secure in Christ. Moreover, he made clear that eating or drinking will not make one less righteous—nor will refraining add measures of righteousness to the one so inclined. However, as he points out in Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8, and 1 Corinthians 10, certain activities may stumble a brother or sister, encourage false teaching and doctrine, lead one into practices condemned in Scripture, or directly endorse evil. Therefore, they must be avoided.

In the context of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul specifically mentioned idol worship—which he

associated with the worship of demons. This adds yet another level to the subject. Matters of conscience therefore must include things beyond food, drink, days of the week or even casual entanglements and engagements with the world.

We are in the world—but not of the world. We live in and around a culture of Idolatry, Mysticism, Spiritism, Humanism, Secularism, Marxism, etc. and often find it hard to separate these worldviews from the Biblical. Therefore, lines get blurry—especially until one grows in the knowledge of the word of God and the worldview it declares.

Discernment between being in the world and of the world (as Paul addressed) can be illustrated in our present context. For example, our days of the week are linked to Greek paganism—Saturday, Sunday, Moonday, etc. Birthday parties celebrated with round cakes and candles commemorate the Sun. Trees are worshiped in some cultures and even our Christmas Trees have songs of worship provided them: “O Tannenbaum.” However, having a Christmas Tree is not a sin (assuming you don’t worship it) nor is it sinful to celebrate a birth with a birthday cake, or even worship the Lord Jesus Christ on Sunday.

“All Hallows Eve,” aka “Halloween,” in which the Roman Catholic Church called for a remembrance of departed “saints,” and the Harvest Festivals that celebrate Samhain, the pagan god of the harvest, are regular events on our calendars. On these dates one must remember that providing an alternative for children (in order to keep them off the streets at night, share the Gospel, love our neighbors, “light a candle,” etc.) is not the joining of ourselves with those who intentionally celebrate pagan deities or communicate with the “underworld.” Is it a sin to pass out candy and play games with kids on Halloween? I think not!

However, as mentioned in the text(s), when we are invited to participate with evil, we all must refrain. Another example might be illustrated by an invitation to a same-sex wedding. We can love the homosexual and treat them with kindness—as we would anyone else in sin. However, we cannot attend a same-sex wedding as that would endorse the union and its demonic inspiration. The practice of Yoga, to yoke or unite, is another example. Yoga is a Hindu practice with origins at several millennia ago. Many see it as a physical exercise alone, but those

who have any basic understanding of Yoga will quickly recognize that it is a religious practice.

Practitioners claim, *“Yoga is also commonly understood as a therapy or exercise system for health and fitness. While physical and mental health are natural consequences of yoga, the goal of yoga is more far-reaching. ‘Yoga is about harmonizing oneself with the universe. It is the technology of aligning individual geometry with the cosmic, to achieve the highest level of perception and harmony.’*” – Dr. Ishwar V. Basavaraddi, (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.) Much more could be said...

Matters of conscience must be handled with grace, but idol worship and engagement with those worshiping a foreign god cannot be allowed. Why? Because it encourages wrong, harms others, endorses that which is an offense to God, and harms us!

It is not loving to harm. Therefore, love demands that we refrain from those things that harm others—not because our salvation is at stake, but because we love the Lord and love those around us.

Paul’s point is that we are free and that nothing should be feared. However, not all things are “good.”

Therefore, exercising discernment as we grow will benefit the believer and all those around us.

I love you all,

Pastor Paul