

Parson to Person

1 Corinthians 10 – Part 5 (Leadership by Example)

“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 10:23–33 NKJV).

“Others”—Continued

As we wrap up chapter 10, we must consider how the fact that “all things are lawful for us” should be viewed/handled as we serve others. Paul makes it very clear that eating food sacrificed to an idol will not defile the believer: *“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” (vs. 25). But he also sees how important it is to consider how our behavior(s) may stumble a weaker brother or sister, and even, perhaps, endorse the behavior of an unbeliever.

An Idol—Demonically Inspired

Paul previously said that *“an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one”* (1 Corinthians 8:4). However, he also mentioned that intentional engagement and participation with idolatry is a form of *“fellowship”* with idols—and thus, demons (see 1 Corinthians 10:19–21). Therefore, Christians must refrain from *intentional* participation in idolatry.

Illustratively, *“fellowship with demons”* might be the practice of YOGA (to yoke or link with the infinite and attain Moksha: a release from the cycle of life, death, and rebirth [reincarnation], as it relates to Karma). Another semi-common example might include the practice of consulting the signs of the zodiac, astrology, or a horoscope. This too is a demonically inspired practice—used to distract the believer from a Biblical Worldview and the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Both should be avoided: Lawful, yes. Distracting and potentially dangerous, yes. Edifying, no!

Leadership by Example

Inasmuch as a believer will not and cannot forfeit his or her salvation, even still, lawful behavior(s) may lead others astray and potentially cost them truth, peace, joy, and rest in the Lord. I have seen people led into error by the poor example of other so-called and even well meaning “believers.” For example, in Haiti, many

practice a mixture of Voodoo and Catholicism that has provided a superstitious “faith” that has not provided the truth. Therefore, as a false faith, it fails to provide those things necessary to the saving faith we have in Jesus. This is damnable and must be avoided.

That said, Paul was not addressing a mixture of so-called Christian doctrine with those things unbiblical. He was addressing a mixture of genuine Christian doctrine with the unbiblical. Moreover, he condemned all wickedness. If a believer silently (or otherwise) shows support for evil of any kind, that silence is equivalent to validation and approval. This is why he wrote, “*if anyone says to you, ‘This was offered to idols,’ do not eat it...*” (vss. 28–29). We cannot lead others into sin. The Biblical standards must be upheld by example.

Standing Against Evil

True love demands that believers address the evil of our day and hit (head on) the issues that cost lives and disrespect the Lord. A quote once attributed to Edmond Burke reads, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” We must act in defense of the truth. Lives depend upon it.

Sexuality—an Idol of the Times

I do not need to tell you that we are in a local and semi-global battle over birth-sex identification and human sexuality. We are locally in discussion over transgenderism, bathroom use by birth-sex identification, and same-sex weddings. The latter I will use as my final illustration.

More and more often I am asked if a Christian should or should not attend a same-sex wedding. The answer is a simple no! We cannot! If we attend, we are endorsing! If we endorse, we are affirming. If we affirm, we validate! If we validate, we are misrepresenting the Lord and the truth found within the standards of Scripture. This principle is a modern example of what Paul was addressing in the text.

Our refrain is not a declaration of hatred for the persons—it is a statement of hatred for that which disrespects the high standards of God—and harms the people. We can love the people without endorsing the “idolatry.” Believers cannot have “*fellowship with demons*” (vs. 20). As difficult as it is for many to hear, homosexuality, transgenderism, same-sex weddings, etc., are inspired by demons and cannot be endorsed. God will not have it. He will not look the other way. We are called to love others enough to stand for the truth. We love God! We must also love others! Never, ever endorse idolatry of any kind.

An Unholy Mixture

Israel suffered greatly when they engaged in Idolatry. God commanded them, “*When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these*

abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 18:9–13 NKJV). Israel suffered when they worshipped idols. Israel suffered when they tolerated an unholy mixture. We would do wisely to heed the lessons they learned!

Herein then may we remember:

- 1) All things are lawful but not all things edify.
- 2) Always be mindful of the weaker brother or sister when participating in those things you do—even by faith.
- 3) We are called to represent the Lord in all we do—lead by example.
- 4) True love demands we stand against those things that harm.
- 5) An idol may be nothing per se, but idol worship is a demonic deception no Christian can endorse.
- 6) An unholy mixture has been the downfall of the nations—and millions of people.
- 7) Love God. Love your neighbor. Hate sin.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul