

**TITLE:           LAWFUL? EXPEDIENT? EDIFYING?**

**TEXT:           1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-33**

**INTRO:**       This chapter has 3 main points, each one getting more specific on the topic than the previous one. Paul starts with general exhortations to remain pure in everything (using the example of the Israelites) (v. 1-13). Next he speaks of one of those sins in particular – idolatry (v. 14-22). Last, he instructs on making the right decisions regarding eating those foods that had been offered to idols (i.e., making the right decision when the matter is optional) (v. 23-33). This truly is one of the best lessons we can learn regarding Christian living and the importance of our influence – on one another and on the world.

**I.           THE LAW EXPRESSED (v. 23-24):**

**A. Is it lawful for me? Is it expedient for me? Does it edify me? (v. 23)**

*All things are lawful for me...* (6:12) – this seems to have been a Corinthian saying (e.g., “everything in moderation”). This is obviously in reference to all things God has authorized!

1. *But all things are not expedient* (beneficial, profitable). Paul is obviously not admitting that they were correct in saying that **all** things are lawful. He’s already provided lists of things that aren’t (5:11; 6:9-10). It seems he’s saying that everything God created is good, as long as it’s not abused. The ingredients of drugs & alcohol aren’t inherently bad, but man has altered God’s creations to make things that are harmful & evil.

\*But even among those things that are okay, sometimes they aren’t necessarily beneficial (to you or to others).

Contextually, eating meat offered to idols is okay (v. 19; 8:8 – it doesn’t connect you in any way to the idol). But is it always beneficial? According to this verse, apparently not! He’ll explain in v. 27f.

2. *But all things edify not.* Some things are authorized, but aren’t going to build up. Obviously a meal is just a meal; it’s not designed to “build you up” spiritually. So apparently eating this sacrificial meat can, sometimes, be detrimental (v. 27f).

**B. Is it lawful for others? Is it expedient for others? Does it edify others? (v. 24).**

*Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth (good).* He’s about to make application of this to eating the sacrificial meat. But this is our governing principle regarding others. It’s the definition of agape love – seeking others’ best interest.

1. **John 13:34-35** – ...*love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*
2. **Phil 2:3-4** – *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*
3. There is no room for selfishness in the church! The church should be known not as those who seek their own, but who truly love one another, and care for lost souls.

**II.          THE LAW APPLIED (v. 25-30):**

**A. (v. 25-26) The general law** – *Whatsoever is sold in the shambles (market), eat, asking no questions for conscience sake.* Here he’s talking about your own conscience – don’t worry about it! Everything is okay to eat (lawful), so don’t ask any questions (don’t ask if they don’t tell). It’s lawful because *the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof (Psa 24:1)*. Regardless of its involvement in false worship, this animal was made by God to be good for food (**1 Tim 4:4-5** – *every creature is good...*).

**B. (v. 27-30) The application & exception**

1. (v. 27) *If any that believe not bid you to a feast, and you want to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience sake* (application of v. 25). He’s talking about a meal, not a *religious* feast (v. 28). This steak may be from a cow that’s been offered in sacrifice to an idol. But if you’re not told, then you don’t know it. Don’t go asking, since eating it isn’t going to hurt you physically or spiritually!
2. (v. 28-29a) **BUT**, *if any* (the unbeliever or a weaker brother) *say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it* (informed you), *and for conscience sake* – think about your influence, and the name & influence of the church. There’s still nothing wrong with the meat. But if someone tells you about it, and you eat anyway, you’re going to hurt his conscience (either a weaker brother, or a non-Christian who you may have otherwise been able to influence).
3. (v. 29b-30) *For why is my liberty judged by another’s conscience?* It seems Paul is putting himself in the position of the stronger brother who knows it’s okay to eat the meat. Why is my freedom being judged? It shouldn’t be, but that’s what’s going to happen if I carelessly go ahead and exercise my right. Conscience is the issue – not mine, but theirs. If I knowingly do something to violate someone’s conscience, then his conscience will judge me. *For if I by grace (thankfulness) be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that which I give thanks (1 Tim 4:4-5)?* Because although it’s okay to eat it, it’s **not** okay to violate someone’s conscience just to do something that’s optional!

**III.         THE LAW EXPLAINED (v. 31-33):**

- A. (v. 31)** *Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (2 Cor 5:9; 1 Pet 4:11).* With the exception of giving thanks for the food, there is nothing about the simple act of eating & drinking that glorifies God. What *does* glorify God in these things is how we show our concern for others, even sacrificing our rights in order to seek another’s best interest (v. 24).
- B. (v. 32)** *Give none offense* (occasion of stumbling) *to anyone* – Jew, Gentiles, the church. Be aware and observant of all people (Christian or non-Christian) and concerned about your influence on them.
- C. (v. 33)** Follow my example – my goal is to save souls by any means possible (but obviously within the boundaries of God’s law).

**CONCLUSION:** The message of this chapter can be applied in many different areas of our lives. For example, should we buy from businesses who will then use that money to support sin (e.g., homosexual agenda)? You’re simply buying a product; you can’t control how they choose to spend *their* money (it’s not yours anymore). But what if your decision will cause someone to stumble?

We see then that being a Christian requires an enormous amount of effort and thoughtfulness about everything we say and do. Our goal is to go to Heaven and take as many with us as possible. We do **not** want to do anything that will interfere with this goal.