

All Things to All Men

Chapter 5

Audio Lesson: New Testament #48



Objective: To understand Paul's instructions on difficult issues in the church and how he applied principles of Christian liberty to those issues.



Be careful . . . that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.

—1 Corinthians 8:9

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

—1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Paul wrote chapters 8-11 to address several issues the Corinthians were dealing with. In each case, whether the issue was an issue outside the church, like eating food sacrificed to idols, or an issue within the church, like how to observe the Lord's Supper, Paul focused on the relationships among brothers and sisters in Christ and how those who are stronger ought to regard those who are weaker in the faith.

In these chapters, we learn three principles of Christian liberty. First, we learn that in all things, our foremost concern must be the glory of God. Second, we learn that our actions should be based on what results in the salvation of others. And third, we learn that the profit of others is more important than our own profit. The issue is not what is right or wrong, or our right to do, or not to do something. The issue is what glorifies God, what leads to the salvation of others, and what profits others. When we reflect on these three principles, we realize they express a concept Paul will spell out for us later in this letter this way: love.



1. True or false? Many issues in the Christian faith are not a matter of right and wrong but of love for others.
2. True or false? The question of whether a Christian should eat meat sacrificed to idols was extremely important because rules about what to eat and drink are essential to Christianity.
3. True or false? The idolatry common in Corinth was very similar to Christianity, so believers simply transferred their old practices to their new faith.
4. True or false? Paul supported spiritual freedom for believers and hated legalism.
5. True or false? Paul looked down on women and did not believe they were equal to men in God's eyes.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

6. What was Paul's instruction to those who understood that idols are nothing and eating meat offered to idols was meaningless?
 - a. Those who are strong should rebuke those who are weak for their lack of understanding.
 - b. Those who are strong should ignore those who are weak and do whatever they want.
 - c. Those who are strong should set an example for the weak by boldly displaying their freedom.
 - d. Those who are strong should respect the convictions of those who are weaker and not offend them.
7. Which of the following are important criteria for determining proper behavior? (choose all that apply)
 - a. The glory of God
 - b. Personal preferences
 - c. Selfish desires
 - d. The salvation of others
 - e. Personal profit
 - f. The profit or welfare of others
 - g. Personal rights
 - h. Self-preservation
8. Which of the following words best sums up the philosophy of Christ?
 - a. Earn
 - b. Get
 - c. Give
 - d. Abstain

9. What did Paul mean when he said he would become all things to all men in order to save some?

- a. That he would do anything, no matter how dangerous, unethical, or immoral, to win people to Christ
- b. That he would change his message to fit the desires of those to whom he preached
- c. That he would disguise himself so no one would know he was a Christian
- d. That he make necessary cultural and social adjustments in order to communicate his message to those who needed to hear it

10. How did Paul describe himself in his ministry?

- a. As a slave or servant of Jesus Christ
- b. As a devout Jew
- c. As a former Jew
- d. As the expert on Christianity

11. In what ways did the Corinthians observe communion, or the Lord's Supper, inappropriately? (choose all that apply)

- a. They discriminated against those who were poor and could not bring much food.
- b. They combined it with idolatrous rituals.
- c. They often drank enough wine to get drunk.
- d. They came with a selfish attitude.
- e. They only did it once a year.

12. With whom are we communing when we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

- a. With God only
- b. With other Christians only
- c. With God and other Christians
- d. With God, other Christians, and even unbelievers



If you were writing to Paul about difficult issues in your church, what would you ask him? How do you think he would apply the "law of love" and principles of Christian liberty to issues in your fellowship?



Thank God for the "law of love" by which we live and the liberty He gives us to serve Him freely. Ask Him to give you wisdom as you apply His principles to your life and to your relationships with other Christians. Ask Him above all to fill you with His love and help you always seek the best for others.



Going Deeper

1. What problems do we have in our churches today to which we could relate and apply Paul's solutions to the problems in Corinth (recorded in chapters 8-11) about the right and wrong of believers eating meat that had been offered as a sacrifice to a pagan idol? _____

2. How do we personally apply Paul's teaching that it is not about right or wrong but about how much we love the weaker brother who thinks it is wrong to eat this meat? (Consider also Romans 14) _____

3. Summarize and apply the profound statement of Paul (recorded in 9: 19-23) that demonstrates the way he personally applied the principles he prescribed for them in chapter 8. _____

4. As we consider chapter 10:31-33 in pastoring God's people , identify and apply three principles that should guide us when we are dealing with what we might call the "gray" issues or issues that are not black and white or clearly right and wrong. _____

5. How are we to summarize and apply what Paul teaches in chapter 11 about the role and function of women in the church? _____

6. How do you apply Paul's great insight into the historical and biographical passages in the Bible, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 10:11? _____

7. Summarize and apply Paul's inspired instructions for communion in chapter 11: 23-33 and his profound advice about overcoming the temptation to sin in chapter 10: 12-14. _____
