

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

### First Corinthians – Chapter 8 & 9

#### Chapter 8

#### Offending Your Brother By What You Eat!

*“So, I conclude that if my eating certain food deeply offend my brother and hinders his advance in Christ, I will never eat it again. I don’t want to be guilty of causing my brother or sister to be wounded and defeated. (v13 TPT)*

After dealing with the issues of marriage in Chapter 7, Paul moves on to deal with other issues raised by the church in Corinth and in this chapter, the issue of food offered to idol is the topic. Is it right for a believer to eat the food offered to idols?

#### What is an idol?

1. Whatever we treasure more than God, whatever drives our thoughts and actions, becomes an idol...
2. An idol is the worship of images and false gods.
3. An idol can be associated with pride, self-centeredness, greed, gluttony (Php 3:19), and love for possessions (Matt 6:24).

However, in this context, Paul was referring mainly to our 2<sup>nd</sup> definition of an idol. His main point of view is this:

- **An Idol is nothing i.e. they are demons that have no power over the believer.**

*“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.” (vv4-6)*

- **The issue of idols is a divisive issue based on the background of each person and their level of faith and understanding.**

*“But not everyone has this revelation. For some were formerly idolaters, who consider idols as real and living. That’s why they consider the food offered to that “god” as defiled. And their weak consciences become defiled if they eat it. Yes, we know that what you eat will not bring you closer to God. You are no better if you don’t eat certain foods and no better if you do” (vv7-8 TPT)*

- **Although, those who are strong in faith have the freedom to eat whatever, but it would be a sin if this believer eats this food to the detriment of believers with weaker faith.**

*“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.” (vv9-12)*

- **He therefore concludes with v13 that if he eating certain food will offend his brother and hinder his advance in the faith, he would rather not eat again.**

“So, I conclude that if my eating certain food deeply offend my brother and hinders his advance in Christ, I will never eat it again. I don’t want to be guilty of causing my brother or sister to be wounded and defeated. (v13 TPT)

The point here is that of considering other believers while exercising our freedom in Christ, so they are not left wounded and defeated. You might want to say to them “grow up” and one can understand with you yet, for the sake of Christ, we consider them in what we do i.e. in how we exercise our freedom in Christ.

## Chapter 9

### Supporting the Ministers of the Gospel!

Paul in this chapter changes the topic to deal with the appreciation of himself as a minister of the gospel (an apostle) and made his point clear. He is seeking appreciation on 2 fronts:

1. As a minister and his calling in the Lord
2. To be financially supported

“Who serves in the military at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not enjoy the grapes for himself? Who would nurture and shepherd a flock and never get to drink its fresh milk?” (v7 TPT)

This verse I believe captures the message of this chapter and we will begin to explore his points:

#### The Questions:

- Am I not completely free and unrestrained? *Absolutely!*
- Am I not an apostle? *Of course!*
- Haven’t I had a personal encounter with our Jesus face-to-face—and continue to see him? *Emphatically yes!*
- Aren’t you all the proof of my ministry in the Lord? *Certainly!*

If others do not recognize me as their apostle, at least you are bound to do so, for now your lives are joined to the Lord. You are the *living proof*, the certificate of my apostleship. So, to those who want to continually criticize my apostolic ministry, here’s my statement of defence.

- Don’t we apostles have the right to be supported financially?
- Don’t we have the right to travel accompanied by our believing wives *and be supported as a couple*, as do the other apostles, such as Peter the Rock and the Lord’s brothers? *Of course, we do!*
- Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to stop working for a living?

#### (vv1-6 TPT)

These questions express the frustration Paul was experiencing. As a pastor and a leader in the body of Christ, I identify with Paul’s sentiments here. It was difficult to utter then, and it is still a difficult subject even now.

He used the illustration in verse 7 to buttress his point:

“Who serves in the military at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not enjoy the grapes for himself? Who would nurture and shepherd a flock and never get to drink its fresh milk?” (v7 TPT)

Who would nurture and shepherd a flock and never get to drink of its fresh milk? What an illustration!

## Old Testament Reference:

*“Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who ploughs should plough in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?” (vv8-12)*

When Paul referred to what God told Moses, he said God was not so much concerned about the oxen, but you and I. Paul ended these verses with 2 questions:

- If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?
- If others are partakers of *this* right over you, are we not even more?

Thoughts: What is your take on these questions from Paul?

## Paul Concludes His Point – Again with a question:

*“Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.” (vv13-14)*

Those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple...and those who serve at the altar should partake of the offerings of the altar. Even so, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

## Preaching the Gospel Regardless:

*“But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.” (vv15-18)*

I guess this is where most preachers will sit. Irrespective of appreciation or not, I must preach the gospel.

Extending to all in the body of Christ, we should have the same attitude as Paul here. In times of convenience or not, we just preach the gospel. Paul cursed himself by saying “Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!”

If there is a lesson here, it is that we make preaching the gospel our top priority.

## Becoming All Things to All Men:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more:

- and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews;
- to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law;
- to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law;
- to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak.

I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. (vv19-23)

Thought: How can we become all things to all men for the gospel's sake?

**Paul's Secret & Encouragement:**

*"Isn't it obvious that all runners on the racetrack keep on running to win, but only one receives the victor's prize? Yet each one of you must run the race to be victorious. A true athlete will be disciplined in every respect, practicing constant self-control in order to win a laurel wreath that quickly withers. But we run our race to win a victor's crown that will last forever. For that reason, I don't run just for exercise or box like one throwing aimless punches, but I train like a champion athlete. I subdue my body and get it under my control, so that after preaching the good news to others I myself won't be disqualified."* (vv24-27)

- Let us all be intentional about the race before us.
- We should run this race with the intention of winning.
- This race (your race) will involve self-discipline and putting your body and the lust thereof under control.