

LifeWay Family Bible Series for July 3: Help others to know the truth of the gospel_62705

June 20, 2005

Posted: 6/20/05

LifeWay Family Bible Series for July 3

Help others to know the truth of the gospel

- 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 9:19-27

By Mitch Randall

First Baptist Church, Bedford

Freedom with responsibility is the hallmark of the Baptist faith. For centuries upon centuries, noble Baptists have heralded the call for believers to live free from the legalistic attributes of religion, while at the same time embracing a sense of Christian responsibility. Faith should never be a weight carried around one's neck, yet it should not be an invisible cloak worn only when the time is convenient either. Faith in Christ is freedom with responsibility.

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

In First Corinthians, the end of chapter 8, the Apostle Paul brings to light

this incredible premise writing within the context of consuming idol foods. The Corinthian Christians, it appears, were eating foods sacrificed to idols. While their new-found faith in Christ Jesus had set them free from sin and religious legalism, their faith was not a license to engage in any behavior they saw fit.



[For a
printer-friendly
version, click
on the printer
icon at bottom
of page.](#)

Eating particular foods sacrificed to idols does not sound like a grievous act to the 21st-century ear, but to the first-century person, there was an understood problem. What a person ate, it was thought in the first century, actually became part of the person—especially any meat from an animal.

Now, we know this to be true physically, on a molecular level, but when deciphering the same thesis on a spiritual level, we raise an eyebrow or two. However, this belief is not unique to ancient Palestine. The Native Americans of this country thought animals eaten for nourishment became part of the person physically, mentally and spiritually.

Thinking of this problem in this light sheds a great deal more importance on a public diet. With the Christian emphasis on the Lord's Supper being prevalent in the liturgy of the church, any foods sacrificed to idols ran contradictory to the consumption of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul strongly encourages his fellow believers in Corinth to be aware of such reckless behavior and its harm to the Gospel. The way of Christ was not meant to be seen as some sectarian cult, but as the true fulfillment of God's promise to all humanity.

As Christ followers, we are free from the constraints of the law, yet we would be wise to embrace the responsibility we have as Christ's representatives to the world. While there are many things that might be permissible, not all things are proper. We should live out our faith as though several sets of eyes were upon us, so that we make the best impression we can upon those we're trying to reach for the sake of gospel. Let it never be said we were a stumbling block for those the Spirit of God is trying to call.

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Paul builds upon this idea later in his letter. He makes it clear that even though he lives as a free man, he has chosen to be a slave to all for the sake of the gospel. Now, there is a temptation to read this as though Paul was creating a false façade for the sake of winning people to Christ. Yet, after a careful examination of the text, this is not so. Paul was not creating false facades for the sake of the gospel but embracing people at their points of interest.

Paul had a keen ability to reach out to a multitude of people. He could speak with Jewish scholars about the fine details of Torah. He could talk for hours about the pagan rituals of Hellenism. Paul was well versed in many aspects of life, and because of that, he was able to engage people and steer the conversation toward the presentation of the gospel. His ability and success allowed him to, in his own words, "share in (the gospel's) message."

For the contemporary Christian, we would be wise to engage people in their interests. If Paul were writing to us here in Texas, he might say, "To the football fan, I was football; to the NASCAR fan, I was NASCAR, to the cattleman, I was a cattleman; and to the Hispanic, I was Hispanic." Let us

be all things to all people, so that as many as we can reach hear the gospel and claim it as their own.

Discussion questions

- What does it mean that we are free in Christ?
- Are there certain things Christians should not do, even though they might be acceptable? What are they?
- What should we do to help others come to know Christ?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.