

Abstinence for the Sake of Others

by C.I. Scofield

The sermon emphasizes the importance of self-government and considering the impact of one's actions on others, particularly in matters of personal liberty and conscience.

Scripture: Matthew 7:1, Romans 14:3, Romans 15:1, 1 Corinthians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 8:1, 1 Corinthians 10:24, Galatians 5:13, Philippians 2:4, Colossians 2:16, 1 John 3:16

Topics: "Christian Liberty", "Selfless Love"

Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the principles of Gospel liberty, governing life by edification and the law of love as outlined in 1 Corinthians 10:23-33. He addresses the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols, emphasizing the dangers of arrogance in judgment and the importance of not causing a weaker brother to stumble. Scofield highlights the need for Christians to apply the law of prudence in personal conscience, considering what is expedient and edifying, while avoiding enslavement to harmful habits. Additionally, he stresses the law of love, where believers must prioritize their brother's spiritual well-being over personal freedoms, following the example of Christ in selfless love and consideration for others.

Transcript

(1 Cor. x:23-33.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The principle of Gospel liberty (verses 23-33).
2. The principle of governing life by that which will edify (verses 23-33).
3. The principle of governing life by the law of love (verses 23-33).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Perhaps no part of the Pauline message has been more perverted than that to which the question of meats gave rise. It cannot be necessary to explain what that question was. The Corinthians and other Greco-Roman converts from paganism had been in the habit both of feasting in the temples on meat which had been exposed before idols, and of purchasing such meat in the markets. In their heathen state all this stood connected with the idolatrous worship. After conversion the question of continuing to eat such meat inevitably arose. Was it not holding on to so much of the old false religion?

Into that question the Holy Spirit by Paul entered boldly. The whole answer is found, not in our lesson alone, but in the analogous discussion in the eighth chapter. Taking the teaching as a whole, the principles laid down are these:

1. There is a peril of conceit, of arrogance, in judging concerning such matters; a danger of assuming to have "knowledge" (1 Cor. viii:1-3).

2. The idol is nothing, and the meat undefiled by being exposed before the idol. Here the principle is that a thing good in itself is not to be rejected because some people make a wrong use of it. In parts of Europe "blessed" candles are offered for sale. The apostle would say: "The so-called blessing has not injured the candle: it will give just as much light as an unblessed candle."

3. Concerning all such matters no Christian may judge his brother, or despise his brother. "Neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not are we the worse." (1 Cor. viii:8). "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. xiv:3, 4). "Let no man, therefore, judge you (i. e., be your conscience) in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath" (Col. ii:16).

This is the law constantly and shamelessly violated by the strict. The Christian who does not play cards, or attend the theater, is bitter, outspoken, and condemnatory of the Christian who does.

4. The law of prudence. This law is for self-enforcement, in the forum of each Christian's own conscience. It is not a law by which Christian may judge Christian, for that would be an infraction of the third principle. Paul states this law of prudence: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. vi:12).

The law of prudence, then, is self-applied in the personal conscience; it is never for external application. And it sets up a two-fold standard: "Is it expedient (profitable); does it edify (build up)?" And, "Does it expose me to the danger of being brought under bondage to the habit of it?"

As to the first, the whole man, spirit, soul, body, must be taken into account. "Does it enlarge the mental capacities? Does it develop along noble lines the emotional and volitional part of me? Does it contribute to bodily well-being?" If it does not; or if observation and experience show that along the line of the proposed indulgence slavery to habit may be formed, then the thing is to be summarily rejected.

5. The law of love. And here the Christian comes out and looks about him. It is not now solely a question for himself --a question to be settled by the fourth principles. He now takes account of himself as a member of the body of Christ; as his brother's keeper. He does not come out to judge his brother, but to judge himself as responsible for his brother's edification.

He will not eat meat in an idol's temple, even though he knows the meat to be good and nourishing, and the idol but a block of stone, because a weak brother, just escaping from heathenism, having still a conscience hurt by anything pertaining to idolatry, might be led back to do what, even mistakenly, might give him a bad conscience.

In other words, to the law of prudence, with its questions: "Will it profit me? May it enslave me? The Christian adds the law of love with its question: "If I do this thing, may I injure my brother?"

Two cautionary words of vital importance:

First.--The law of love, like the law of prudence, is for my own self-government; it is not a club in the hands of a fanatic or a puritan that he may govern me.

Second.--I am to judge what, in my conduct, would harm or help my brother by the Scriptures, and not by human standards, which may be strict with the strictness of pharisaism, and far from the large wholesomeness of Jesus Christ.

In other words, I may owe a duty of enlightenment and of enlargement to my weak brother. Never forget that in the performance of that duty Christ broke with the strict religionists of His day, and incurred the reproach of being "gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ci-scofield/abstinence-for-the-sake-of-others/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net