

## Introduction

We have been in the midst of mid-term elections, very important elections that have determined which party has the controlling majority in the house and senate. There have been numerous debates between the different parties, and interviews with the candidates. One of the frequent comments about the debates and interviews is that the candidates do not answer the questions. Two weeks ago, Fox News host, Shannon Bream, asked Stacey Abrams some questions. None of the questions got answered. Instead, Stacey disregarded the questions and spoke about the things that she wanted to talk about. It was an opportunity for her to try to win political support.

Stacey Abrams was not alone in refusing to answer questions. Politicians frequently avoid answering questions because they do not want to alienate anyone from supporting them. Dr. Peter Bull, a British communications expert, came up with a list of thirty-five techniques that politicians use to avoid answering questions, which he defines as equivocation. Some of the ways are: 1) ignoring the question (which Stacey Abrams used), 2) acknowledging the question without answering it, 3) questioning the question, 4) attacking the question, 5) attacking the interviewer, 6) refusing to answer, and 7) making a political point.

The Apostle Paul was obviously not a politician, and he did not fit into this category. When he was asked some difficult questions by the Corinthians, he took time to address each of their questions. He gave them Biblical principles to help them understand why they should or should not do a certain thing. Paul spoke about his own rights and liberties that he did not use, and why he did not use them. Our text today begins with “Therefore...” and Paul has just given them some examples from the Jewish fathers that they were to learn from. Paul has given them thorough and comprehensive answers to all their questions.

In chapter eight, Paul began addressing their questions about eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. This was not a simple issue, as much of the meat in Corinth came from meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Some of the meat markets and butcher shops were at the back of temples, and they received their meat from the priests in the various temples. There were numerous idols that were worshiped in Corinth, and there were shrines and temples throughout the city. When someone presented an offering to one of these gods, the priest officiating it would offer one third of it on the altar. The person that brought the offering would receive one third of the meat, and the priest would take one third for himself. The priests received far more than they could eat, so they had agreements with the meat markets so sell off all the excess meat.

(1 Cor 8:1–4) “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols... {4} Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols...”

There were several ways that those in Corinth might deal with meat that had been sacrificed to idols. If they bought meat in the meat market, it was probably meat that had been sacrificed to idols. If they went to someone’s house for a meal, the meat served had probably been bought at the meat market, and was meat that had been sacrificed to idols. The host might have given an offering and the meat that he served was from his share. Another way that they might be served meat was in a public event held at a temple. The temples had smaller dining rooms, and then some larger meeting rooms, which were used for weddings, parties, and other special occasions. Finally, meals were a big part of the pagan worship, and that is why they had lots of dining rooms in the temples. As part of their worship service, they would eat meals together at the temple. The temple of Aphrodite had over a thousand temple prostitutes, so these pagan feasts had wine to drink, an abundance of food to eat, and sexual pleasures afterwards.

In the text today, Paul is wrapping up his response to their questions about eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. He is going to address three different situations: 1) eating meat in the temple, 2) eating meat bought in the market, and 3) eating meat in the home of an unbeliever. Since this question about eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols is part of a bigger discussion on liberties and rights, Paul will conclude with some of the main points that he has been making about the use of these liberties and rights.

### **Paul's Wrap-Up on Meat Sacrificed to Idols**

1. Eating Meat in the Temple
2. Eating Meat from the Market
3. Eating Meat in the Home of an Unbeliever

(1 Cor 10:14–11:1) “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. {15} I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. {16} Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? {17} Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. {18} Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? {19} What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? {20} No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. {21} You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. {22} Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we? {23} All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. {24} Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor. {25} Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; {26} FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS. {27} If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake. {28} But if anyone says to you, “This is meat sacrificed to idols,” do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; {29} I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? {30} If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks? {31} Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. {32} Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; {33} just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved. {11:1} Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

#### **1. Eating Meat in the Temple (1 Cor 10:14-22)**

Paul begins with, “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.” Paul has just mentioned five different examples of the Jewish fathers that he wanted them to be aware of, and to learn the lessons from their sins; and he has exhorted them to take heed so that they do not fall. Idolatry is just one of those five examples, but it is the main topic of his question about eating meat sacrificed to idols. Paul is going to focus on idolatry and why the Corinthians should not participate in the idolatrous feasts in the temples.

(1 Cor 10:14) “Therefore, my beloved, flee (pheugo) from idolatry.”

Paul exhorts the Corinthians, his beloved, to flee from idolatry. The word for flee is pheugo (Strong's G5343), which means to run away, escape, or flee. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, he told them to flee immorality. When we are tempted to sin, whether it is sexual immorality, idolatry, or any

other sin, we are not to play around with it, entertain thoughts of it, or treat it casually. We are to take heed, lest we should fall. We are to look for God's way of escape. We are to get away, escape, or flee from the sin. If we succumb to the temptations, we should not expect any different results than what the Jewish fathers experienced.

(1 Cor 6:12–18) “Flee immorality....”

(1 Cor 10:12–13) “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. {13} No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to judge what he was saying. Everyone of us must judge the things that we are taught. I like what the Bereans did when they heard Paul teach; they received the word with great eagerness and then examined the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. That is what Paul is asking them to do, examine the things that he is teaching them to judge them. This will help them form their own conviction about it. As parents, teachers, and leaders, we should do more than give people Biblical standards; we must give them understanding, and help people be convinced of these truths in their own minds. We need to encourage people to take notes, and go back over the teachings they hear, and judge what is taught.

(1 Cor 10:15) “I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.”

(Acts 17:11) “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”

Then, Paul brought up the Lord's Supper. “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.” Most of take the Lord's Supper with crackers or communion wafers, and we miss the picture that we are partaking of one bread. Then, Paul said that the nation of Israel who ate the sacrifices were sharers in the altar? Paul is making the point that when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are one with the Lord and with one another.

(1 Cor 10:16–18) “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? {17} Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. {18} Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices shares in the altar?”

Then, Paul turns to the pagan sacrifices in their temples. The sacrifices in these pagan temples were sacrifices to demons and not to God. If they participate in this idolatrous worship, they are shares in demons. Paul did not want them to be sharers in demons. Then, he said, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.” When they participate in the idolatrous worship, they are committing idolatry, and Paul has already told them to flee from idolatry. They are not to have anything to do with idolatrous worship. The meat is not the issue. The thing sacrificed to idols is not anything, but their participation in the idolatrous worship was something very big. They cannot be involved in the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

(1 Cor 10:19–21) “What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to **idols** is anything, or that an **idol** is anything? {20} No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to **demons** and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in **demons**. {21} You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of **demons**; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of **demons**.”

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul had addressed them dining in an idol’s temple. This dining may have been because of a special occasion, like a wedding or anniversary, and may not have been part of a meal associated with idolatrous worship. The meat served at those meals would have been left-over meat from the sacrifices that had been made to idols. Paul’s concern there was to prevent causing a brother to stumble and ruining his conscience. Paul said if food causes my brother to stumble, he would not eat meat again. But now, Paul has been addressing the meals that were specifically part of their idolatrous worship in the temples. He is specifically addressing the pagan worship services, which incorporated meals. He did not want them to be participating in the meals that were part of the worship of these idols. They were to have nothing to do with them. They were to flee from idolatry.

(1 Cor 8:10–13) “For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? {11} For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. {12} And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. {13} Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”

When the Jewish fathers provoked the Lord to jealousy, they brought God’s judgment and wrath on themselves. Even though they were God’s chosen people and had experienced His miraculous protection, deliverance, provision, and leading, they still provoked God and suffered consequences. Paul asked the Corinthians, “Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” Are we going to be aware of the Jewish fathers? Are we going to learn from their mistakes? Are we going to take heed, lest we also fall? In the same way He dealt with Israel, He will also deal with our idolatry. Therefore, we should not partake at the table with demons and provoke God to jealousy. We are not stronger than God, and this is not a battle we want to get into.

(1 Cor 10:22) “Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?”

Paul’s reference to idolatry and the Lord’s jealousy comes out of the first commandment in Exodus 20. God said, “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God...” Anything that we put before God is an idol, and God is jealous and He is not willing to be second to any idol. God wants to be the priority and love of our life.

(Ex 20:3–5) “You shall have no other gods before Me. {4} “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. {5} You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,”

We may not struggle with meat eaten in a pagan temple, but we do struggle with putting other things before God. God tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Many people put recreation, sports, and other things before God. If they are completely free of other things, then they may go to church. Many people put their businesses before God. As a young man, I was passionately pursuing a career in golf, and the Lord gave me a choice, either golf or Him. I laid my clubs on the altar that day, and it has never been an idol since then. Danny Daniels, who has published many great Christian songs, was a professional musician when he received Christ. The Lord gave Danny the same choice as me, either music or Me. Danny laid his guitar and music on the altar that day, and then the Lord told him to pick it up again, and that He would use his music for His glory. We cannot put our golf, guitar, or anything else before God, or it is an idol in our lives.

In Colossians 3:5, God tells us that greed amounts to idolatry. The love and pursuit of money can be an idol, if it is put above God. There are some businessmen that love to make money, but they honor God with their money, and use it to advance the kingdom of God, not for selfish motives or to stockpile it.

(Col 3:5) “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”

In 1 John 2:15-16, John wrote that we are not to love the world nor the things in the world, and that if they loved the world, the love of the Father is not in them. This is what Paul was telling the Corinthians. They could not participate in the table of demons and the table of the Lord. We cannot have one foot in the church and one foot in the world. We need to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, and have no idols before Him because He is a jealous God.

(1 John 2:15–16) “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

In 1 Samuel 15, Saul had not obeyed God, and Samuel confronted him. He told Saul that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. He said that rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. While we may not struggle with eating meat in a pagan temple, there are many that struggle with obedience and insubordination, which amounts to idolatry.

(1 Sam 15:22–23) “Samuel said, “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. {23} “For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.”

## 2. **Eating Meat Bought in the Market** (1 Cor 10:23-26)

The second area that Paul deals with is meat bought in the market. He said to eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience’ sake. The principle behind this is from Psalm 24:1, which says that the earth is the Lord’s and all it contains. There is nothing wrong with the meat in and of itself. In 1 Corinthians 8:8, Paul said that we were not better if we do not eat or the better if we do eat.

(1 Cor 10:23–26) “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. {24} Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor. {25} Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience’ sake; {26} FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS.”

(1 Cor 8:8) “But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.”

It is lawful to eat the meat, but it may not be profitable, and it may not edify. In chapter 8, Paul said that we need to use love in our determining of what we should do. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. When considering whether to eat meat or not, we need to consider the effect on others, and we should seek to edify our brothers, not destroy them. In particular, Paul said that we can hurt the conscience of a weaker brother, cause him to stumble, and it would be a sin against Christ. The context of chapter eight was meat eaten in an idol’s temple, but in this case, Paul is speaking about meat bought in the meat market that may have been sacrificed to idols. Paul said to eat anything that is sold in the market, but not to ask questions. If someone tells us that it was sacrificed to idols, we are not to eat it. Again, it is for conscience’ sake.

(1 Cor 8:1) “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.”

(1 Cor 8:10–13) “For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? {11} For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. {12} And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. {13} Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”

### 3. **Eating Meat in the Home of an Unbeliever** (1 Cor 10:27-30)

The third scenario that Paul address is meat eaten in the home of an unbeliever. He said, “If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is before you without asking questions for conscience’ sake.” I do not believe that this is an unbeliever inviting them to go to the temple and worship with them. Paul would not have spoken about the meat; he would have addressed the idolatry. These are unbelievers that the Corinthians were in relationship with. These unbelievers may be people in the neighborhood, people at work, unbelieving relatives, or just unbelieving friends. Notice that Paul does not discourage them from eating with unbelievers. Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, and set an example for all of us. Eating with an unbeliever gives us an opportunity for them to get to know us, experience God’s love, and for us to share the gospel message with them.

(1 Cor 10:27) “If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience’ sake.”

(Matt 9:10–11) “Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. {11} When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”

One year there was a caddy who did not have a place to go to during the off-season. I told him that he could stay at our house. After being at our house for about three days, he was asking questions at the breakfast table. I gave him the opportunity to receive Christ, and he prayed to receive Christ at breakfast. We filled up the master bathtub and baptized him later that day. Having meals and exercising hospitality can provide great evangelistic opportunities.

Paul told the Corinthians not to ask their unbelieving host if the meat had been sacrificed to idols. He told them to eat what was set before them without asking questions. He told them to do this for conscience' sake. In verse twenty-nine, Paul clarifies that this is not their conscience, but the conscience of the unbeliever. If the unbeliever informs them that it has been sacrificed to idols, they were not to eat it. The unbeliever may think that it is wrong for you to eat the meat, and this may damage his conscience, and his perception of you.

(1 Cor 10:28-30) “But if anyone says to you, “This is meat sacrificed to idols,” do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; {29} I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? {30} If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?”

### **Conclusion and Applications (1 Cor 10:31-33)**

Paul asked two questions that the Corinthians might ask in response to his answers. The first is, “Why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?” The second is, “If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?” Paul answers these questions in his wrap-up of his answers to their questions on liberties.

Paul gave three concluding answers about the use of liberties. First, Paul told the Corinthians that whether they eat, drink, or whatever else they do, they are to do all to the glory of God. It is not about our rights and liberties; it is ultimately about doing everything for the glory of God. If I eat this meat, will it bring glory and honor to God? That question should be at the top of our list when considering our liberties.

(1 Cor 10:31–33) “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. {32} Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; {33} just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.”

Our second consideration should be whether this liberty will offend someone. We are to give no offense to Jews, Greeks, or to the church of God. We are not to offend unbelievers or believers. If we are considering whether to do something or not, and we know that it will probably offend some, we should exercise self-control in all things and refrain from doing or saying it. We are going to offend people at times, but it should not be purposely. We should do everything we can so that we do not give offense to anyone.

The third consideration is whether using this liberty and freedom will profit others. We are not to seek our own profit, but the profit of others. If this will not profit others, then we should not do it. Paul opened this discussion in chapter six, saying all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. Paul opened this passage by saying that all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. If something is not profitable, especially for others, we should not use that liberty or right. We need to seek to do things that are profitable for everyone.

(1 Cor 6:12) “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

(1 Cor 10:23–24) “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. {24} Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.”

Paul used his own life as an example. He said that if meat would cause his brother to stumble, he would not eat again. In closing, he again used his own life as an example, saying, “Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.” Although the translators put 1 Corinthians 11:1 as the start of a new chapter, many scholars believe it is the concluding verse of Paul’s discussion on liberties and meat sacrificed to idols. He said, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” We should look to the example that Paul set, and our primary example for all of us to follow is Christ. Paul was a great leader, and great leaders follow Christ’s example, and live exemplary lives that people can follow.

(1 Cor 8:13) “Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”

(1 Cor 10:33–11:1) “just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved. {11:1} Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

Paul said that all things are lawful, but not all things edify others. We are not to offend others, but to seek to edify and build them up. In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul stressed the importance of love in determining whether we should do something. He said that knowledge puffs up, and our knowledge can ruin our brothers. Love, on the other hand, edifies others. Love does not cause our brother to stumble. Love considers what is best for others. When considering whether to do something, we must seek love, and what will build up, strengthen, and profit our neighbor. Most of all, we need to make sure that everything we do brings glory and honor to God.

(1 Cor 8:1) “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.”

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, we may not struggle with meat eaten in pagan temples, but we have daily decisions about the use of our rights. We have freedom of speech. Help us to use our tongues to build up others, and give grace to those who hear. We have many such freedoms and liberties. Help us to seek to love at all times, because love edifies. Help us to do things that are profitable, and not just profitable for us, but profitable for others and for Your kingdom. Help us to do all things for the sake of the gospel. Help us not to give offense to unbelievers or to believers. Help us to do all things for your glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



**Introduction** (1 Cor 8:1-4, 1 Cor 10:14-11:1)

1. **Eating Meat in the Temple** (1 Cor 10:12-22, 1 Cor 6:12-18, Acts 17:11, 1 Cor 8:10-13, Ex 20:3-5, Col 3:5, 1 John 2:15-16, 1 Sam 15:22-23)

2. **Eating Meat Bought in the Market** (1 Cor 10:23-26, 1 Cor 8:1, 8:8, 8:10-13)

3. **Eating Meat in the Home of an Unbeliever** (1 Cor 10:27-30, Matt 9:10-11)

**Conclusion and Applications** (1 Cor 10:31-11:1, 1 Cor 8:13, 10:23-24, 8:1)