

Jeff Corinthians 13

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Date: 25 November 2025

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[0 : 00] Chapters 8 to 10 form one argument, one block of teaching, one unit of thought. And the main issue is food sacrificed to idols and whether the Christian should partake of!

Now, this obviously can seem strange to our 21st century ears, but in this 1st century setting in this Roman city, it was very common for food to be sacrificed to idols.

And there were guilds, do you know that word? Kind of like modern trade unions, guilds of butchers that would produce most of the meat for sale in the marketplace.

And by and large, those guilds, like butcher shops, were associated with various deities. And the butcher shop itself would be connected to the temple. So, again, well, perhaps that's very similar. So, again, the offering of meat to these idols was tied to the whole butchering process. So, it might have been difficult at times to get meat that wasn't, that had not been sacrificed to idols.

[1 : 16] So, this is the situation Paul is dealing with. Now, if you read the chapters together, you might think that there could be a contradiction between chapters 8 and chapters 10.

But that, seeing the difference, is going to help us understand what Paul is after. So, look at chapter 8, verses 4 to 8. Paul says this, Verse 6, However, not all possess this knowledge.

But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Okay? So, what's he saying? Sacrifice to idols, not sacrifice to idols.

It doesn't matter. It's just food. Just because food has been offered to an idol doesn't mean it's somehow irreparably damaged, infused with demons. No, it's fine. It's food. Eat it.

[3 : 08] Okay. Now, look over at chapter 10. Chapter 10, verse 21. Or, verse 19. What do I imply, then, that food offered to idols is anything, or an idol is anything?

No, I imply that what pagan sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. 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. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? It almost seems contradictory.

But what's at issue here in the second text is not the activity of merely eating meat, but the setting in which you eat it and the implications of that setting.

So, in chapter 8, Paul is dealing with those who make their decisions on whether to eat the meat or not strictly in terms of knowledge, strictly in terms of what they know to be true, strictly in terms of theology, you might say, with no regard for anyone else.

[4 : 25] And so, here we come to something that is characteristic of Paul. It's Paul's famous yes, but style of arguing. We see this throughout this letter.

We saw it in chapter 7. So, we see Paul saying, yes, but. Yes, but. So, chapter 8, verse 1.

Food offered to idols. We know that all of us possess knowledge. This knowledge puffs up. There's fusiao again, but love builds up. Verse 4.

We know that an idol has no real existence. So, that says yes. Yes, meat sacrifice to idols is nothing. But, verse 7. But, not all possess this knowledge.

Not everyone knows this. So, some members of this community are so accustomed, because of their pagan background, they're so accustomed to thinking of idols as real, that they cannot eat this meat without conjuring up the whole symbolic world of idol worship.

[5 : 39] And it would have been vivid. In many of these temples, the animals, unlike Jewish sacrifices, where the animal is killed, and then the animal is burned, many of these animals would have been burned alive, with horrific squeals and smells.

Some could not escape the pagan associations. It just was too alive for them. So, Paul says, not everyone have this knowledge. Not everyone is clear on these matters.

Then there's another but in verses 9 and 10. Food will not commend us. No better off if we eat it. No better off if we don't.

No big deal. But, take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?

So, the pastoral point he makes is that those who are strong in conscience, who are not bothered by this eating of meat because they know it's nothing wrong with it, it's not irreparably damaged, it's not demonic, etc., they must be willing to deny themselves for the good of those with weak consciences.

[7 : 06] To the weak, Paul says, basically, don't violate your conscience. Why should we not violate our conscience?

If you violate your conscience, then you will diminish the power of your conscience to alert you to wrongdoing. In other words, if you violate your conscience here, even though there's nothing wrong, then you might be tempted to violate your conscience in another area where your conscience is actually correct.

Now, Paul would certainly envision someone's conscience being strengthened through teaching. Paul would want people who don't have this knowledge, that meat, sacrifice, knowledge is nothing, he wants them to arrive there.

So, he has a category for strengthening your knowledge or your conscience through teaching, etc., but what the strong should not do is force things down people's throat, make fun of their scruples, mock them, force them into it.

No, you don't do that. Now, in chapter 10, again, the issue is different. Here, Paul is dealing with people actually going into the temples and participating in the services and rituals.

[8 : 34] And so, Paul's argument takes a different turn. Now, it's not deny yourself for the weak. Now, it's flee from idolatry.

So, to participate in these pagan banquets is to associate yourself with the worship of demons. Again, chapter 10, verse 20. No, what pagans sacrifice, they offer to demons, not to God.

I do not want you to be participants with demons. 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.

There's actually a reference to it back in chapter 8. If someone sees you eating in an idol's temple. So, if you do this, the word sharers there or participants, that's the word koinonos.

Koinonos. Cognate with koinonia, right? So, to be a participant of demons means to be part of a fellowship that worships demons.

[9 : 41] Our fellowship is not such a thing. Our fellowship is a fellowship of Christ, one belonging to Christ, one centered on Christ and characterized by Christ and His death and resurrection.

So, for the Corinthians to take part in these services brought them into a close association with idol worshipers, which was not God's will for them.

So, we might say today, it's fine to... Do you know what the Super Bowl is? Okay. It's fine to watch the Super Bowl.

But it's not okay to go down to a strip joint. Do you know what that is?

Okay. But it's not fine to go down to the strip joint and watch the Super Bowl there while you're being served with ladies. No, that'd be totally wrong.

[10 : 40] The context is what's in view and the associations are what's in view. There's also... Let me mention this. This often gets overlooked. There's a socioeconomic aspect to this as well. Feasts held in temples were a normal part of everyday life in Corinth.

And so, wealthier Corinthians would be invited to these temples, to these banquets as a regular part of their social life to celebrate birthdays and weddings and healings attributed to God's.

And so, you might work for someone and he's a pagan and he's going to throw a big birthday party for his wife and it's going to be at the pagan banquet. So, come.

Celebrate my wife's birthday party. It's going to be down at this temple. We're going to have a big feast. And often, your public or professional duties almost required the networking that surrounded these events either by attending them or even sponsoring them.

And so, business contacts would be made here. Hey, come. We're going to go to this temple. There's a feast being held. We're going to come. I'm going to introduce you to my attorney and you guys can maybe do some business together and so forth.

[11:52] And when you add to that, how, and you guys, I think, experience this more than me, in my setting, and I mentioned this yesterday, eating was a social courtesy.

And so, to refuse to go to one of these things could be an affront to the host. And if that host was a business associate or something like that, then it could be troublesome.

So, there was probably a good deal at stake for some of these wealthier Corinthians. And then, on the other hand, you had the poor Corinthians who would have probably no opportunity for such things.

Meat would not even have been a normal part of their diet. Meat would have been a luxury. And they certainly wouldn't be invited to these banquets like the wealthier people would.

And so, there's levels of complexity here. On the one hand, you had those participating who would not only have been more wealthy, but probably more educated.

[13:04] And they probably would have had the knowledge he talks about in chapter 8. So, they could go in, they could take the eating of the meat in stride. They're not thinking, I'm participating in demonic stuff.

They see it as no big deal. And so, they go to an idol thing. You see that reference here. Some people know that this is no big deal, but if someone sees you in an idol's temple, so this would have been a wealthier person.

They know this is no big deal. Their theology is correct. They're there as a matter of their business. They could take all this in stride. So, you've got that on the one hand.

On the other hand, those who are not invited to such things and perhaps who had much, maybe more superstitious, less sophisticated, maybe greater problems associated with the superstition surrounding this eating of this meat.

And so, the result then becomes yet another occasion for what? Division. Division within the church along socioeconomic lines.

[14:11] So, there's a number of things going on here. So, as foreign as this might sound, there are some important principles at work.

And I want to mention a few of them. One, of course, there is the issue of denying our own rights, denying ourselves for the good of others. Paul says this in 8.13.

Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat. I'll never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. So, again, the context is important.

A weaker Christian who has pagan, idolatrous associations with the meat, they just can't bring themselves to do it. Even if you teach them, they say, I know it, but I just can't escape it.

And then, but they see someone else do it, and then they're tempted to do it, and when they do it, ah, I shouldn't have done it. That's what's in view. What's not in view is the legalistic, self-righteous person with strong convictions who demands everyone do what they do.

[15:25] They look down their noses at other Christians. Now, in our church, we don't do this, and we don't do this, and we don't do this, and if you do it, you are ungodly.

Paul is not asking us to be careful not to offend a person with strong opinions who thinks they're strong. He's not asking us to be cowed by self-righteous people.

I think if someone would have said to Paul, and this applies to many different things, right? Meat, sacrifice, even, I don't know, I could use the example of alcohol.

Maybe there's someone who has a history with alcohol, and maybe their father was an alcoholic, and they were beaten by him because he would get angry drunk, and just the thought of drinking, it just, they just can't think of it, and then they see someone else who knows there's nothing wrong with alcohol.

It's a gift from God, according to Scripture. It can be abused, yes, but I just don't want to do it, and so I might, no, I'm not going to have any when I'm with this person, but if someone looked down at Paul and said, you good Christians do not drink, don't you know it's wrong, don't you know it's sinful, how dare you, Paul?

[16:54] You know what Paul would, I think, would say? Pass me, you know, waiter, bring me a bottle of the Cabernet. Pour it right in their face, you know.

I think that's what he would do. Or if the person, you know, if they say, oh, eating meat, that's wrong, good Christians don't do that, don't you realize that, you ungodly person. I think Paul would say, you know what, I'll have my steak rare. I want the ribeye, and I want it rare. Now, Paul is not saying let self-righteous, legalistic people dominate. He's saying you love other people, and don't offend them. Don't tempt them to violate their conscience, and thus harm them. You see this distinction? I grew up in the southern part of the United States, and there's a real heritage of sort of legalistic, there's an old saying that, you know, Christians don't drink or swear or dance or play cards or date anyone who does, you know. [17:57] In other words, there were these, Christianity was defined by these legalistic standards, and I have faced this. you, you, um, and you just can't, in other words, there's just a culture of it's godlier not to drink.

Here's what the Bible would say, it is not godlier not to drink. It might be wise not to drink in times, and if a person comes to me and says, you know what, I just, I just don't like the taste, and I've got bad associations with it, I don't mind, you go ahead, I don't mind you. I think it's fine for a person who doesn't want to. I'm not going to say, well, why aren't you doing it? No, that would be wrong too. Um, but again, Paul's concern here is about the weak who we, by our actions, we could confuse them or attempt them because of a weak or ill-informed conscience. Does that make sense? Um, so that's clearly an obvious implication here, um, but there are others that I think we should be aware of, and I think we can often overlook. We take texts like this, we just sort of narrow them down to one little, little, uh, bandwidth, uh, of, of application. Uh, I think here's another one. Uh, what kinds of associations are appropriate for believers and which are not?

[19:34] So, let's say you're a member of a particular secular, uh, club, or part of a, uh, a fraternity. Do universities have fraternities? Yeah, in America, the fraternity system at universities is really big. Um, they're just basically clubs of groups of students and most of them are characterized by, um, some do service, service things, service projects. Most of them just have big parties and drink a lot of alcohol. Um, um, but let's say you're a member of something like that. Um, what is implied by your membership or by your participation or by your attendance?

I think that's a question to ask. Um, what if you're asked to go to a church service with a relative where you know there is doctrinal error?

Let me tell you, this text does not say, this text does not tell you what to do.

[20:48] This text, this text prompts you to ask what is implied by my going. This is an issue with many Asian Christians who wrestle with attending traditional meals, venerating, uh, ancestors and so forth.

Here's the point. Any subculture that claims our loyalty must be carefully examined. So it's incumbent upon every believer to scrutinize your external attachments.

I, I confronted this all the time when I was in, when I was in business. Uh, you know, going out people that I worked with would go out after work for dinner.

But what you know, dinner really means a lot of drinks and a little food. Um, although, I would go at times and, because those were real opportunities.

Um, and because of the, because of my, my, my witness, my sharing the gospel, my going with those people to dinner with a lot of drinks did not send any, it did not subvert my witness to Christ at all.

[22:17] It didn't send any message to anyone that I was somehow unfaithful to Christ. It was an opportunity. I remember one time I was, I was, uh, person, a woman came up to me at church and she, she was really wrestling with the situation.

Her brother, uh, was a Catholic priest. And, or training to be a Catholic priest, uh, or in the process. And the day for his ordination, I don't know if that's even the right word, but the day of his ordination was coming up.

And, uh, and this was when, I mean, for, for a priest, it's almost like a marriage. Uh, they, they, this is where you're sort of being totally dedicated to Christ and you, you lay down on the floor in the shape of a cross and all this kind of stuff.

And she was invited, her brother wanted her to come to this. And she goes, I don't know if I can come to this. What would you tell her? You don't tell her anything until you ask some questions, right?

And so I asked her some questions. I said, all right. So I drew her out about her relationship and I said, does your brother know you're, you're Christian?

[23 : 35] She goes, oh yeah. So it turns out she was saved out of a Catholic family and radically saved, became, just fell in love with Jesus, uh, left the Catholic church, joined this church, been there for many years, loves the Lord, serves the Lord, raises a Christian family, et cetera.

I said, so your, your family knows you're a believer, right? Oh, absolutely. I've shared the gospel with them many, many times. They know that you have a totally different stance than the Roman Catholic church.

Oh, absolutely. They, in fact, they, for years it was really hard. They almost disowned me because my, but now we've kind of reconciled and, you know, they, they live with my differences. They know I love the Lord. I still reach out to them, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

I said, okay, so if you go, will any of them be confused that you have somehow compromised and you are somehow agreeing with what's going on? She goes, oh no, that would shock that I come. In fact, you know, Carol, what's Carol thinking? And is she condemning me? And now I think it would surprise me if I came.

[24 : 39] So do you, and so what do you, what do you think they'll get from it if you come? What message will it send? Well, I think they'll just think, well, man, she really loves me. That she would risk compromising herself or just to be, to show me support.

And then I asked her about her brother. He's becoming a priest. Do you think he's a Christian? She said, actually, I do. He loves, he really does love Jesus.

Now, I mean, our doctrine is really different, but I'm not sure that those, that he's seeking to earn his way to heaven. I think, I think at the root, he loves the Lord.

We've actually had some good conversations about the Lord at times, believe it or not. Really?

Yeah. So, this was many years ago, but I told her, I said, well, you know what, Carol, I think if you feel free in your heart to do this, it sounds to me that you can do this with a clear conscience and as an expression of your love for your brother because no one is, you're not sending, it doesn't sound like you're sending any wrong messages, but only good messages.

Had another young, not a woman, older, single, who was handicapped and she had a close relationship with her mom. She was very dependent on her mom.

[26 : 20] Her mom would take her to church and take her to our church, but her mom was Catholic. And she came up to me and so her mom would bring her to church.

She would take you to church, but then on the way home we have to stop by my church so they go by the Catholic mass. And this lady, sweet lady said, is that wrong, Jeff?

Am I compromising? We teased it out. Her mom knows she's a Christian, her mom's a Catholic, her mom knows she doesn't believe, all of that stuff has been going on for years.

Her mom's actually bringing her to her church, but she's just saying, if I'm going to bring you to your church, then I'm going to go to my church afterwards and you just have to come with me. And then, so in that situation, I said, well, you know, Susan, I don't think there's any problem with that.

Your mom knows where you're coming from. It's almost a matter of convenience. You're just sort of thanking your mom by going. I'm not sure just sitting through that services. I don't think it's sending any wrong messages.

[27 : 24] I don't think I would have a problem. Then she came back to me, I don't know how long, a month later, maybe six weeks later, and she said, okay, Jeff, I have another question for you. All right, now my mom is saying, I really want you to partake in the Mass.

I want you to take Holy Communion. And then I went, so we talked about that, and then I went, ah, okay, this is different. This is different than you going along with your mom.

After she's already taken you to your church, you just going along with her there, this is different.

Now she's asking you to participate in something you can't agree with, something that runs counter to your beliefs.

The Mass in a Roman Catholic church is seen as a sacrifice, it's a sacramental grace, it's fundamentally different than the Lord's Supper in our setting. I said, I don't think you can participate.

So you see, those are some of the questions that you have to ask. Something that's becoming more and more common now is attending same-sex marriages.

[28 : 37] there's actually a little controversy that brewed up recently because the editor of a well-known Christian magazine wrote about going to a marriage of two homosexual, what he called two homosexual friends, as a way to love them, and there were even pictures that got placed online, they were dancing afterwards, so he's out there dancing on the dance floor with his gay friends, and he's just like entering into the thing, but he said, no, no, I'm not approving of it, but I'm there to love them and to show.

How do you think about that one? Good, thank you for shaking your heads now. Yeah, I just think, I think that's completely wrong. I think that by going, and especially by, I think that by going, you are showing, you are affirming something that is an abomination to God.

I do not see how you can escape that. I think you, and I think you can express your love to this person without showing solidarity with this action.

I think I can talk to that person. I just want you to know, you know I'm a believer. I'm honored that you would invite me. I hope you know I can't come and here's why.

It does not mean I don't value you as a friend. It does not mean I don't love you. It doesn't mean, it just means what you're doing. You just know it's wrong.

[30 : 22] It's according to the scripture, according to biblical teaching, according to my view.

This is just wrong and I just can't be seen to be approving it, but that doesn't mean I don't value you as a friend. I just want you to know that. I'm not going to be able to go.

I think you can have a conversation like that. It's a sensitive conversation, but I think you'd have to have it because I don't think that would be one. I think that would be one that would violate some of the principles here.

One other application that I think we would be wise to, especially given Paul's use of Israel, their wanderings in the wilderness.

As an example, Paul says in verse 8, we must not indulge in immorality as some of them did. These things, verse 11, happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction.

[31 : 31] Therefore, let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Therefore, beloved, remember 618, flee from idolatry.

Flee from it. So, it's always helpful for Christians to be asking, are there ways in which I am unknowingly or unwisely flirting with idolatry?

Some in Corinth were probably participating in these banquets and thinking, this is no big deal. I can handle this.

I know these gods are nothing. It's just a social thing. Paul points out, no, there are real things involved. You're associating with a fellowship of demons.

Don't you realize you're participating in this? And so, Paul uses, that's one of the ways he's using the history of Israel here to illustrate God's judgment on arrogance and idolatry.

[32 : 34] God is not to be trifled with. And so, flee from idolatry. So, whenever we face an opportunity or an activity and find ourselves thinking, no problem, I can handle it.

I can be involved in this that I know it's not really great, but I can be involved and still maintain my walk with God, then you should realize, stop. You're on dangerous ground.

You're flirting. You may well be flirting with idolatry. And Israel's tragedy and Paul's admonition should guard us and come to our minds.

That's chapters 8 to 10. I'll get your question in just a second. We didn't touch on chapter 9, but the way chapter 9 fits into all of this is essentially in the first few chapters of the first few verses of the chapter.

Paul uses himself as an illustration of the principle that the strong put their rights aside for the weak. So the structure of the chapter is very straightforward.

[33 : 52] Verses 1 to 14, Paul says, I have all these rights. Verses 15 to following, I have forsaken all these rights for the sake of the gospel.

Paul, so he's just using himself. So chapter 9 is just an example of Paul saying, I give up my rights for the sake of Christ. Look at me. Paul is an apostle.

He has rights to gain a living from the gospel. He has rights to be supported by the church. He has rights to take along his wife, but he chose not to use these rights in certain situations.

In the case of Corinth, he would not accept money from them. He had a right to, but he would not do it. Why? Because he did not want to be associated with the sophists who charged for their teaching, who gained prominence by their teaching.

They built their reputation based on what they charged. Paul says, no, I would rather work with my hands, endure hardship, associate with the lowly, so that I'm not associated with them, all for the sake of the gospel.

[35 : 00] And that's what he deals with in verses 19 and following. Paul becomes all things to all people. In other words, voluntary self-denial supersedes the rights of a robust conscience.

Put it that way. So that's the argument of chapters 8 to 10. Yeah. Yeah, it's a very good question. I, again, and you allude to this, what's in view here is not, what's in view here, Paul wants to serve the weak in conscience.

And, and, and, and, and what causes them to stumble is them seeing you and, and thinking, well, maybe it's okay, and, and, and thus imitating you and going against, going against their conscience. That's different from someone looking at you and saying, I think you're sinning. That's different. So, Paul's point here is, is not, don't indulge in something if someone else thinks you are sinning.

[36 : 22] The argument is, don't indulge in something if someone thinks it's sin, but they follow you in it, and then their conscience is destroyed or damaged or, so I, practically speaking, and, and in here, Paul, too, is speaking of this community of a church, right?

So, I think, contextually, I think Paul would say, my ability to know whether I'm causing someone to stumble or not is not too difficult.

I know this is a community of a church, I know this church, I know who the people are, I'm going to be careful in certain settings because I don't want them, and this is Paul, I don't want them to think, well, Paul does it, I guess it's okay, oh man, now I'm, why did I do it, now I feel bad.

So, I think Paul's ability to monitor that is, I think he assumes the ability to monitor that. the idea of, well, I might be out somewhere and someone might walk by and I don't even know and they see me and draw a conclusion, I don't think we should, I mean, in general, I don't think we should walk around paranoid that that could happen.

now, if you're in a, if you're in a, I don't know, if you're in a setting and you know that it's quite likely for you to be seen and that causing someone to stumble could happen, then I think wisdom would be, well, I'm going to, I'm going to refrain and I'm happy to, you know, it's like, it's a material thing.

[38 : 36] I live as if not, so it's no big deal to me if I refrain on this night from a drink, maybe. But I don't think though, from knowing Paul's argument here and the context here, I don't think that he would want to burden us to live paranoid that something might happen, someone might see us and draw that kind of conclusion and we might stumble them.

He's talking here about the community of a particular church. How does that affect you? Now, that's a good question and that's a different, that's a different issue.

I would separate that issue. So that gets into 1 Timothy 3 and a pastor, an elder being above reproach and having a good reputation for those outside.

Now, those outside are not other Christians. Those outside are non-believers. Ta-exo is the word Paul uses. So, is it wise for a pastor to be careful in his public expressions of his freedom?

It can definitely be wise. You don't want to bring repute upon your church. Now, that's not causing someone to stumble. That's not wanting to bring reproach upon your church.

[40 : 01] So, I could see a pastor, I'm going to be careful in certain settings because, you know, I don't want people to see that and then draw undue conclusions about my church and me.

And so, I think wisdom can be utilized in some situations. Yet again, I want to, what I, I think you have to differentiate between, okay, is this just a wise thing to refrain from?

Is this a wise thing not to do because I don't want to unduly damage the reputation of our church in this community?

Or, am I afraid to be condemned? And I don't mean just personal fear, but just, or the situation is, yeah, we might be condemned by Christians that we're on a totally different page with, and maybe some of these people, I'm not even sure if they're Christians or not.

That's just a, that's a wisdom line I think you just kind of have to walk. My main thought there is just, I would put that in a different category. That's not stumbling the weak. But it could be wise if you're wanting to protect your reputation for the cause of Christ and for the reputation of your church and for the good of your people.

[41 : 36] I think that's a very insightful question. I mean, Jesus, some of his biggest problems came from eating with tax gatherers as sinners.

And he wasn't just eating because he was called a drunkard, right? Slandered is one. He wasn't, obviously. But, so I mean, I think that, that's what I'm saying.

That gets to sort of that other point. What I don't want to be is controlled by others' legalistic standards. And I think it could, my exercising my freedom over against that even sends a message on what's most important, on how I define godliness.

So, yeah, that's why I said there's kind of a, it's a wisdom, it's a wisdom issue there. If doing something would bring real reproach upon the church and pressure upon the church and slander through the community, I may as a pastor go, I don't want that.

I don't want that for my people. people. But if it's, well, you know, I, if my church has a reputation in the community for, those are Jesus guys, I mean, they love, they love, I know they love, I disagree with them, they're wrong, but I know they love Jesus and I know they love, they're godly, but you know, they've got this drinking thing going on and I think that's wrong, then I'm maybe a little bit less concerned.

[43 : 16] especially if our reputation for doing good, good works and godly people, I'm probably going to be less concerned. But that's a, yeah, that, I think one would just really have to understand your context and understand the implications of what you're doing, so.

Chapter 11. Chapter 11 deals basically with the assembly of the church, so now we're moving, remember we have, the negative, as it were, the negative treatment of idolatry ending in this, like 618, this fundamental imperative flee from idolatry, 618 flee from immorality, 1014 flee from idolatry, and then this concluding do all to the glory of God, chapter 10, 31.

then he deals with the positive side of this, in other words, Christian worship, chapter 11 deals with the assembly of the church, and it does so in two main sections, the covering of women and the Lord's supper.

Now briefly, I only have time, I think, to speak about the first of these. In order to understand the first few verses of chapter 11, you have to understand that Paul is using a pun.

So he says this, verse 3, I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

[44 : 54] Every man who prays or prophesied with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head covered dishonors her head. So you see what he's saying, in verse 3, Paul affirms that Christ is the head, he's using head in two different ways.

So Christ is the head in the sense of authority of the man, and man is the head in the sense of authority over the woman. And then verse 4, Paul says that every man who prays with something on his head, meaning on his thing on top of your neck, while he's praying, disgraces his head in the sense of authority.

In the same way, every woman who prays or prophesies with her head, the thing on top of her neck, uncovered, disgraces her head, meaning her husband, the one who's head in the sense of authority.

And all of these uses of head involve this word, this very controversial word, kephalae.

Are you guys familiar with the controversy surrounding this word? Is that something that has touched you at all? Oh my, it has touched us. There has been, and this has gone on for 20 plus years, a firestorm around this.

[46 : 23] And Wayne Grudem, you know that name. I was his TA. Actually, he's done extensive work on this word.

In fact, in the appendix, do you guys have the book, Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood? It's a really, it's sort of the, it was the Bible of complementarianism at one point.

And it still is. It's still an amazing book. But in the appendix to that book, which is actually a response, he wrote an article in 1985 about the meaning of this word.

He got critiques on it, and then he wrote a response to those critiques, and it's in this book, and he examined 2,336 examples of this word in ancient Greek.

And then a man I actually studied under in Washington, D.C., Joseph Fitzmaier, who is a renowned, maybe the greatest Catholic New Testament scholar of the last half of the 20th century, maybe the 20th century.

[47 : 30] He did work on this word as well. And the controversy is this. Does this word mean authority, or does this word, many feminists, evangelical feminists, have said, no, this word doesn't mean authority.

It means source. Like the headwaters of a river, where a river begins. Like the source of the Nile is in Ethiopia, right?

We know this. That's very important. But so, and so a woman says, no, and so when Paul says a man is the head of his woman, no, he means, he doesn't mean there's any authority there.

He's the source. In other words, he nourishes her, gives her life, or something like that. Well, both Fitzmaier and Grudem have shown definitively, I think, when the word is used metaphorically, it means authority.

The only time, does the word ever mean headwaters or source of a river? It can on occasion, only when it's used metaphorically, and never when it involves human beings.

[48 : 42] It's a metaphor. So as a metaphor, in a plural sense, it could be used that. But both Grudem's and Fitzmaier's work has shown that in the singular, when the word refers to people, it always carries the idea of authority.

It's a fairly, it's not an uncommon word in the Old Testament. Generals are called heads of armies. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is called head of the nation. Roman emperor is called head of the people.

Leaders of the tribes of Israel are called heads, kephali of the tribes. So it's always involving a relationship of authority. And so when Christ is called the head of a man, he's being referred to as the authoritative head of the man.

And so is the man, the husband, not every man over every woman, no, the husband over his wife. So there is an issue of authority here. Now in terms of the head covering and what this means, in verse 10, the wife is to have a covering on her head.

The actual word is not a hat or covering. The actual word is a woman should have a, an ecstasia on her head.

[50 : 02] What does that mean? You know that word? She's to have an authority on her head. NIV, translate that, sign of authority, I believe.

ESV, symbol of authority on her head. I think that's, I think that's exactly right. What's, if you look at Paul's argument, what's in view here is the created order.

And Paul is referring to, he's appealing to the second creation narrative in Genesis chapter 2.

Genesis 1, do you remember, it's clear that man and woman are equally made in the image of God, of equal value before God, equal significance in God's plans.

Absolutely. That's the, that's the first thing to be said when you teach on men and women. That's the first thing to say. We are equal in God's eyes, equally made in God's image. But then Genesis chapter 2, the second creation account that zeros in and focuses on the crown of creation, man, gives more detail and then teaches that the woman was actually made for the man.

In other words, as his helper. That's what Paul says in chapter 11, verse 9. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for the man. So in the creation order, there is total equality of personhood.

[51 : 28] And in settings where women are denigrated or treated wrong or abused, we as a church must affirm this, vigorously affirm this.

But there's a distinction in roles. One, men's roles are not more important. They're just different and they're complementary and they fit together.

And since the woman here is said to be the glory of a man, what does that mean? Well, I think it means that a part of her role in the marriage as his helper is not to worship him, not to be treated badly by him, but no, to bring honor to him.

Just as weird to bring honor to Christ, a woman's role, part of her role, it's not the only thing, but as a part is to bring honor. That's what Paul means when she is the glory of a man.

Therefore, the head covering mentioned in verse 5 and further described in verse 10 as an exousia is intended to communicate something in this culture.

[52 : 41] And I think what is intended to communicate is that is the woman's appropriate submission to her husband, which is a way of honoring him.

So when she prays or prophesies, she must do so in such a way that does not dishonor her head. In other words, her husband, because she would be stepping outside of the created order and

behaving counter to God's creative purposes.

So the head covering is not a belittling sign of submission. It's not a sign of inferiority. No. But it's a signal. It's a signal of her place in the created order of God.

Now, how do you apply this today? Well, we don't see this particular expression as normative.

In our church, there's no women wearing head coverings. Now, they may wear hats sometimes, but they're not doing so in obedience to this particular verse.

[54 : 00] You have to ask the question, is Paul really trying to create a theology of hats? I don't think he is.

It seems Paul is appealing to culturally appropriate expressions of the biblical relationship between men and women. And not necessarily external.

See, as soon as we go to external, then I think we get tripped up. But demonstrating the essence of the relationship. And so, this is a great example, a great hermeneutical example.

With many things in Scripture, these are ancient documents, right? With many things in Scripture, we might see a cultural expression. I was talking to someone the other day about this.

There's the cultural expression, and then underlying the cultural expression, it falls to us as interpreters to determine the enduring principle.

[55 : 17] So, in this case, I think in 1 Corinthians 11, I think the cultural expression is head covering.

But then you have to interpret the text and say, okay, what's underneath this? How does it play in Paul's argument? What's being signaled here? And as I said, I think what's being signaled here is behaving in such a way that we put on display the appropriate ways, the biblical relationship between men and women.

And so, therefore, what is the enduring principle? Well, the enduring principle is that in our actions, and again, not just external, but in our actions, the way we conduct ourselves, that we are, that a wife is expressing honor to her husband.

And guess what? The husband needs his own. He needs to show, to demonstrate his love for his wife, his care for his wife, his cherishing of his wife.

What does Paul say in Ephesians 5? Nurture and cherish. So, when I'm out in public, do other people know, wow, Jeff cherishes his wife? I want people to know that, because I do.

[56 : 42] I do. So, that's a happy thing for me. But I want to send that signal to people. Now, I'm not play-acting. I'm not being hypocritical.

But I'm going to treat her in a way that's just showing her that I love her, that I cherish her. And the wife, in the same way, is going to live in such a way that people know, wow, she is the crown of her husband.

She does him good all the days of his life. So, I think that's what's at work here. In this setting, given what these things signaled, the wife was sending a signal of dishonor to her husband, of a proud or arrogant independence.

And so, Paul is, which would be disruptive and dishonoring to God and to couples. And so, Paul is correcting that. Verse 16.

If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God. I'm glad you asked that, Esaias.

[58 : 09] It's one of the, we might have touched on one of these earlier. But, let's see. I think there are four times in this letter where Paul references this kind of thing.

We have no such practice, nor do the churches of God. Chapter 4, 17. This is why I sent to you, Timothy, my beloved, faithful child of the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in the church.

I mean, everywhere in every church. Chapter 7, 17. This is my rule in all the churches.

The other one's in 14, 1433. For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

The woman should not keep silent churches. So, this is just one of, so he does it four times. What he's basically saying to these Corinthians is, look, you're not alone. You don't make up your own rules.

[59 : 17] This is what all the people of God do. And if you think you're going to go your own way, you're wrong. This is, all the churches do this.

And so, you, by pursuing this particular practice, captured by your own culture, you're going contrary to what all the people of God do, what all the other churches do.

This is what I teach everywhere. This is blatant pride for you to step, to say that you can be different than every other Christian. So, I think that's what he's saying.

Yeah. It is theological. That's the enduring principle. Honor your husband. I think in this particular setting, the head covering was the signal for that.

It meant something in that setting. If a woman wears a head covering in my church, it means absolutely zero. No one thinks the women, virtually every woman in our church does not have a head covering.

[60 : 31] No one thinks they're being disrespectful. It does not mean that in our culture. It did here. So, I don't think, again, I don't think Paul is creating a theology of hats.

I don't think Paul is saying, everywhere, a head covering should mean submission to her husband. And note, what's being said here, it's when she's participating publicly.

It doesn't even say she needs to wear it all the time. But in public ministry, by doing that, even in her public ministry, so to do it in this setting, she was, by doing it, she was dishonoring her husband. Showing a rebelliousness. Showing an independence from him. That's what was being communicated. Paul says, don't do that. And then he gives the theological reason for it. Now, the theological reason is absolutely, yes, the order of biblical manhood and womanhood that we want to honor.

But I don't think this is mandating. The head covering itself is not theological. In this setting, the head covering had theological implications. I don't think, well, it certainly does not have that in other settings.

[61 : 54] Which is why, in the West, I mean, there are very, I mean, a tiny, tiny, tiny section of the church uses head coverings.

And there are separatist movements that arrive out of the Anabaptist movement of the 16th and 17th centuries. And one, one of the major sects that do that, they're not even Christian.

So, yeah, I don't think, there is an abiding principle there. Absolutely, Paul is referring to the second creation narrative. But Eve didn't wear a head covering.

But in this setting, wearing a head covering, or not wearing a head covering when she's praying and prophesying, was seen as dishonoring her husband.

It's possible, there's been some work, one particular commentator sees the Roman background very, as informing this.

[63 : 15] And in a Roman setting, oftentimes in public, in public settings, political settings, and so forth, the leaders of the city, they would wear these robes, they would wear robes with hoods on them.

And when they got up to speak authoritatively, or to participate in the assembly, they would take off their hood and speak.

And so, what this particular commentator says is, that's sort of informing this background. And for the woman to come up with her head uncovered, she's saying, I am coming up and I am an authority.

I'm acting as if I'm a political authority. I'm acting as if I'm an authority in this church. And that could be. That could be informing in a particular setting.