

Edify One Another

Key Verse: “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*”
—*I Corinthians*
10:23

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians
10:23-33

THROUGH THE ENLIGHTENING influence of the Holy Spirit of God, we have come “into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21) Therefore, the Lord’s followers are left without bondage to any law except that we shall love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves.—Mark 12:29-31

However, our fallen flesh is weak. (Matt. 26:41) Our faulty human judgment tends, at times, to distort our use of this “liberty,” which can result in causing injury to ourselves and others, and not be to the glory of God. Prior to our Key Verse, Paul points out how God had set free the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt, but that subsequently, because of their lack of appreciation and loyalty to God, he permitted them to die for their offenses. Paul warns that we too, having been set free, loosed from the bondage of Satan, should be very careful how we use our newly obtained liberty in Christ, citing Israel’s poor example as a lesson.—I Cor. 10:1-14

Paul continues with the words recorded in our Key Verse, declaring that while “all things are lawful” to the Lord’s followers under the man-made laws of present nations, nevertheless there are many things that would

be ill-advised and contrary to the spiritual development of ourselves and others.

When Paul tells us that “all things edify not,” he is speaking of those things which would be within our rights, but which, if pursued, would not edify, build up, or profit us or others from a spiritual standpoint. Such things could result in wasting our consecrated time, and if practiced regularly, could even result in our spiritual regression. Our supreme love for God and our love for our neighbor should bind us only to thoughts and actions which would be edifying to ourselves, helpful to others, and be to the glory of our Heavenly Father.

There was a special trial to the brethren in Paul’s day. The custom among many non-Christian worshipers was to offer animals as sacrifices to idols, giving the carcasses to their religious leaders who, in turn, sold them to butchers in the public markets. Consequently, for those who ate meat, it was very difficult to avoid eating meat which had been offered to idols. This became a serious problem, in that some Christians considered it wrong to eat such meat, while others realized the idol was nothing and therefore eating the meat was not wrong.

How loving is the essence of Paul’s advice. “No one should seek his own welfare, but rather his neighbor’s. Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without raising any question about it on the grounds of conscience. ... However, if someone says to you, This was offered as a sacrifice, don’t eat it, both out of consideration for the one who told you and also for the sake of conscience. ... His conscience, not yours.” (I Cor. 10:24-29, *International Standard Version*) Here Paul shows that we should avoid doing anything that might stumble the Lord’s followers.

This noble spirit shows the boundaries of the Christian law of liberty. Our love should be always generous, thoughtful of the interests and feelings of others, and desirous to “do all to the glory of God.”—I Cor. 10:31 ■