

## Meat Sacrificed to Idols: Freedom, Danger, and History

### Selected Scriptures

#### 1. History

The history of eating meat sacrificed to idols likely goes as far back as idolatry itself. The Lord prescribed the sharing of some sacrificial animals for His own worship (Ex. 12:7-10) and since sin corrupts that which otherwise was good, sinful corruptions of worship are found as established realities in the earliest narratives in the Bible (Gen. 31:19; Josh. 24:2, 14). Idolatry, and the connection between the idol, feasting, and other kinds of revelry, was a common and persistent danger to the people of Israel at all times in their history.

#### 2. Unity

A chief concern in the early church was as to the requirements for salvation: must someone become Jewish to be a Christian? The answer was always no (cf. Gal. 2:16), but it was clearly affirmed by the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1ff). Along with this joyful clarification, the Jerusalem church sent out recommendations for the churches to follow in order to foster unity and peace between gentile and Jewish believers (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).

#### 3. Ability

All foods had been declared clean by Jesus (Mark 7:19) and the Lord later showed this to Peter (Acts 10:9ff). Christians were able to eat whatever was set before them without sinning (1 Cor. 10:27). However, if it became known that the food was contaminated by idolatry, Christians were to be careful in maintaining a clear separation from idolatry that may have been involved with the food that they were eating (Acts 15:20, 29). The conviction to honor God and preserve the unity of the church was to govern how they made use of their ability to eat whatever was before them (Rom. 14:20ff; 1 Cor. 10:28).

#### 4. Purity

There remains a potent danger for Christians in too closely associating with idols, idolatry, and the things which go along with that type of activity: eating food sacrificed to idols and immorality (Rev. 2:14, 20). The idolatry of our culture in the 21st century looks very different from ancient Israel, Corinth, or Rome, but we must be wary to maintain a safe distance from the practices of idolatry in our day.