

1 Corinthians Chapter 8

- Christian liberty: knowledge must be balanced by love.

V: 1 *“Concerning things offered to idols:”*

- Then as today there were divisions in the church; people do divide over different things and this (things offered to idols / liberty) was a subject that Christians were dividing over in Paul’s day, so he want’s to address it. He would later address the divisions happening because of the abuse, or different views on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the dead, the rapture, and the Lord’s supper, communion.
- Division is generally a mark of carnality in some way whereas unity generally is a mark of the Spirit.
- The Bible doesn’t spell everything out for us, some things yes for sure, but a lot of things are left open to our interpretation, or discernment or understanding of things, or simply the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- There are those who feel they have liberty to do certain things, and others that feel those same things are wrong. Sometimes our acceptance or our disregard for various things depends on our cultural standards.
- As Pastor Chuck points out in his commentary on this, in Europe, thinking of Germany and England it’s not unusual for a church to have a beer party or to have wine at their events, no body bats an eye at that. It’s part of the culture.
- There are churches here in the USA who have started to do the same. When someone tell you that their church is spirit filled, you should probably ask them what spirit...
- I’m pretty conservative on that issue and would just as easily say - sure the culture accepts it, but look at the state of the church in those countries. I believe that the Bible should always trump culture - otherwise the Corinthians, or the Romans, or the whoever’s would remain trapped in their culture and stymied in their spiritual growth as believers in Christ Jesus. We enter into a new life, and a new culture.
- The question remains what can we do or not do? How do we exercise our liberties responsibly?
- Corinth was a poly-theistic society, lots of different pagan temples, and practices. Atheism was relatively unknown, everyone worshipped something, some deity.

Generally everything they did was in some way or another dedicated to the various pagan gods of the day.

- All food, whether grain, or fruit, wine, or livestock was in some way dedicated to these pagan gods. Very much like how the Rabbi's bless and sanction the meat or food, making it "kosher" or clean prior to being consumed.
- Similar to the sacrifices at the Jewish Temple, the priests were continually receiving the offerings from the people. Part of it was burned on the altar, part was given to the priest, and part given back to the worshipper making the offering. The portion given to the priest was for him and his family. But often times they received so much they weren't able to use it all and they would often sell it in the market place and thus people had to decide if they wanted to buy it or not - thus the dilemma.
- So just about any food; meat, grain, wine etc. that was for sale in the market places had previously been "offered to idols" in it's transportation from the field to the market place.
- There were some who took the position that Jesus is the only True and Living God, and all these other lesser gods really weren't gods at all and that they didn't need to be concerned about them in any way, meat or food offered to them was of no practical or spiritual value whatsoever, and that it didn't change anything - just eat it and don't worry about it.
- Others took a much different view; and didn't want to be involved in anything "pagan" they didn't want to be defiled by other people's religious practices.
- Again the Bible doesn't spell everything out for us, a lot of things are left open to our discernment and understanding of things, as the Holy Spirit would lead us personally.
- Some people feel very convicted about going to a public beach; to others it's not a big deal, just enjoy the surf and don't stare at the girls.
- Conundrum: someone wins the lottery and wants to give a bunch of money to the church, or say they didn't actually play the lottery, they found a ticket blowing in the wind down the street, you pick it up, and it's a winner! Does the church receive that donation knowing that it came from a casino, an establishment of ill repute, the temple of Mammon? Or, who cares, it's just money.
- No matter how you feel about that, just know that there is some one else out there who feels differently - guaranteed.
- As a Christian, who should I do, or what should I not do?

- This is why Paul is addressing these things, he's trying to bring a balance to some of these things. He'll use things offered to idols as an example that we can then apply to other similar situations.
- Early on he gives us a clue to where he is going with this.

“We know that we all have knowledge.” We could all make an argument, but sometimes knowledge makes us prideful, puffed up, un-willing to yield, love is what edifies and ministers to others.

Romans 14:17-21 *“¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. ²⁰Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.²¹It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.”*

- Love, is and will be the over riding principal applied in these situations.

Paul will readdress this in Chapter 10:

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 *“²³All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. ²⁴Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.”*

V: 2 Paul is sort of saying “so you think you're pretty smart”, those who think that way, generally aren't, they don't know as much as they think they do.

- We are very prone to being self-deceived.

Proverbs 16:18 *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Proverbs 16:25 *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”*

- When I first started to study my bible, I was learning so much - just taking it all in. There was a season when I realized that I was learning a lot, that I had learned a lot, I was kind of impressed.
- Then came a realization that has stuck with me that I really don't know all that much. There is that realization that the more you know, the more you know that you don't know!
- In this chapter Paul more or less says that to the mature believer these idols are nothing; but then in 1 Corinthians 10 he says, that they are connected to demons.

1 Corinthians 10:19-20 “¹⁹What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? ²⁰Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”

- I don't want to be associated with these things in any way!
- In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was intended that God would retain that role, that he would inform them of what was good, and what was evil.
- When they ate that forbidden fruit; their actions more or less said - we no longer need you to tell us what is good or what is bad because now we know for ourselves, we can handle it.
- We still need God to define those things for us.

Proverbs 3:5-7 “⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. ⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.”

V: 3 If we really love God, then He knows us! It's not what you know in this case, it's who you know.

Matthew 7:22-23 “²²Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? ²³And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”

- The discussion thus far seems to be about knowledge. The Bible says that knowledge will increase especially in the last days.

Daniel 12:4 “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

- From the days of Adam to 1965 they looked at all the accumulated knowledge of man, which was a lot, but they estimated that from 1965 to 1975 that the span of human knowledge had doubled, and that from 1975-1980, only 5 years, it doubled again.
- Encyclopedia Britannica stopped printing encyclopedia's in 2010 and went to an all digital format - because they simply couldn't keep up with all the new developments.

- Daniel's prophecy was that knowledge would increase, and it has - but not necessarily wisdom, which is the proper application of knowledge.
- The other interesting point about the increase of knowledge is that these are discoveries to us, but ancient history to God who's known all of it all along - because He is "omniscient" - all knowing!

Jeremiah 9:23-24 "23Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; 24but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD."

- Knowledge isn't enough, it must be tempered, blended with Love.
- "Love without truth is hypocrisy, truth without love is brutality."

V: 4 Now we get down to brass tacks, the real issue:

- We have knowledge (V:1) we realize that an idol is nothing.

"We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other but but One." - The True and Living God.

- We know that these various pagan deities that people worship are truly nothing, we know this.

V: 5-6 We know this, we have this knowledge.

- We know that there are many that are called gods that are not gods.
- There is only One True God, the Father, and we exist by Him, and for Him. Jesus is the creator of all things, and for His pleasure we were created.

Speaking of Jesus:

Colossians 1:16 "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." (Rev. 4:11)

V: 7 Not everyone understands this truth, there are some young, baby believers who are still struggling with these issues. There were these newer converts to Christianity that ascribed mystic powers to these idols, that some of these gods existed as lesser gods to Jesus.

- Paul would later affirm that those who were worshipping idols were actually worshipping demons.

1 Corinthians 10:19-20 “¹⁹What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? ²⁰Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”

- So there is a serious side to this, they aren't gods per se, but they are evil spirits.
- For some of them, their conscience being weak - are being defiled in their own minds.

Romans 15:1 “We then who are strong ought to bear with the infirmities / scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”

Philippians 2:3 “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”

- Some people are struggling with these issues and we need to be careful to take care of them, and not cause them to stumble.

V: 8 When it comes down to it, eating or not eating, food doesn't really matter.

Matthew 15:11 “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

- We can't make ourselves more righteous by eating or not eating anything.
- These things have nothing to do with my relationship with God unless I believe that they do. And if I believe that they do, then they can hinder my relationship with God.

V: 9 We have to be careful how we use our “liberty” so that we don't stumble others, and at times to suspend our own liberty in deference to the well being of others.

Galatians 5:13 “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Romans 15:13 “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.”

- There are a lot of people who feel alienated from God over things that don't really alienate them from God, but because they've been taught that way, that is how they feel, that's what they believe.
- Smoking is a good example. Some people believe that because they smoke cigarettes their lost, they're damned. They think they can't be a Christian because they can't kick the habit.

- That's not so. You can smoke cigarettes and be a Christian, or a pipe, or cigars - you might be a smelly Christian, but a Christian none the less. There are reasons not to smoke that relate to Christianity, like there are reasons not to over indulge in ice cream.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own. ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's”

- But if for example someone knows you're a Christian, a church member - maybe you're an usher or serve in some capacity in leadership and they see you driving down the street with a big ole stogie, it could offend them spiritually, it could stumble them.
- So Paul is saying, it isn't the knowledge knowing that , hey, no this won't alienate me from God, I have the liberty. But be careful that your liberty doesn't become a stumbling block to those that are weak.

V: 10-11 Some guy walking by looks and see's your truck parked in front of the bar. He's curious and looks in and sees you there at the bar having a drink, see's you exercising your liberty.

- He has respect for you, he's looked up to you as a role model, a spiritual leader, someone who really walks with God - as he see's you he's emboldened.
- Well, if he's doing it, it must be ok, I can do it.
- People that have been saved out of alcoholism, drugs, or paganism of different kinds don't have these discussions - they shut it down long before that.
- So often people are watching us and we're not even aware of it. Especially when you get into a position of leadership, or prominence.
- They can be stumbled in their walk, we can be part of driving a wedge between that person and their relationship with God through their feeling of guilt and condemnation, Satan will use it.

Testimony: James / Lion & Lamb Pub.

V: 12 When we sin against a brother that way, we sin against ourselves because we've misused the liberty that God gave us, when we should have just died to ourselves and not been a stumbling block to our brother.

Jesus said:

Mark 8:34 "... Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

- Who are we that we should do anything in the exercise of our liberty to cause someone to stumble that Christ gave His life to save?
- We don't want to be in a place of working against Jesus.

V: 13 Whether its food, or drink, or a new car, or other things - we need to consider carefully how these things will impact others and to not do knowingly do anything that might cause a weaker brother to stumble.

- Walking in love, I'm not as concerned for my liberties as I am for my brother.
- Walking in love, seeking to build up the body of Christ, being careful not to do anything that would bring offense to the name of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8a "¹Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ²And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. ⁴Love suffers long / is patient and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade / boast itself, is not puffed up; ⁵does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never fails.."