

# 1 Corinthians

## Chapter 8:1-13

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- **1 Corinthians Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Ungodly divisions result from man's wisdom.
- Chapter 2 Carnal man cannot understand our Spiritual God.
- Chapter 3 All Christians will have their labors tried by fire.
- Chapter 4 Boasting in our leaders puffs up and destroys fellowship.
- Chapter 5 Maintain the purity of the Church.
- Chapter 6 Do not dispute before the world and do not partake in sexual immorality.
- Chapter 7 Principles of marriage
- Chapter 8 The responsibility of liberty

- **1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

- **Introduction & Review**

Having addressed the many issues which surround the topic of marriage and divorce, Paul turns his attention to the issue of eating meat which had been previously sacrificed and offered to idols. As he wrote in chapter six, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. In this section Paul teaches about how we have this liberty and how we are to use it

- **Exposition**

### 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

*Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.<sup>2</sup> And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.<sup>3</sup> But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.*

- Somewhat switching gears, Paul addresses the issue of eating meat which had previously been sacrificed to idols. Paul teaches that we all understand that an idol is really nothing but some thing created by our hands. We all know that the meat does not somehow mystically change into non-meat. But aside from that there may be those whose consciences are such that eating such meat would seem inappropriate. Although we with our knowledge could argue a great case against their assessment, demonstrating our knowledge is not necessarily an act of love.
- If anyone thinks that his knowledge is all that is necessary, that his understanding is the final word, then he demonstrates that he isn't as knowledgeable as he thinks he is. This is because knowledge without love is sin. It would be possible to define love as *applied* knowledge. Love is action motivated by understanding. Love without understanding does not bring glory to God.
- Notice that those who truly love God are those whom He knows. There are those who will declare that they know God or that they love God but the important point isn't our declaration of whether we love or know Him, the question is are we known by Him? As you will recall, at the final judgment, there will be those who make those claims yet the Lord declares that He never knew them-not, "...once I knew them and now I don't" but "...I *never* knew you."

*<sup>4</sup> Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.<sup>5</sup> For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),<sup>6</sup> yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.*

- Paul goes on to explain what he meant in the prior verses by his use of the word knowledge. We all know that idols are nothing despite the fact that they are called gods. And we also know that there are gods, powers, dominions, demons and others in the universe. The point is that all of them, like us, are on this side of the creator/creature distinction. But despite how obvious this is, the sinful heart would rather worship an inanimate object rather than the creator. Note 1 Kings 12:25-33

*<sup>7</sup> However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an*

*idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.<sup>8</sup> But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.*

- Paul points out the problem, although we have this knowledge and the knowledge is genuine and true, there are those who may not have the knowledge because of weakness in their conscience. How are we to treat this weakness? Is this an opportunity for us to attack the weakness so as to "make it strong?" No, here Paul teaches us that *there is a greater right than being right*.
- We must also know that weakness of conscience is not to be confused with legalism. Legalism isn't super righteousness, it is self-righteousness. We are not instructed to give deference to our legalist brother. Those who attempt to set up a standard which is higher than God, or other than God, are not righteous at all.

*<sup>9</sup> But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.<sup>10</sup> For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?<sup>11</sup> And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?<sup>12</sup> But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. NKJV*

- The caution here is important because the temptation is a strong one, especially here in America where we all have on the tip of our tongue, "I have my rights!" Here we are told that our liberty is something we truly have and it is something that we can truly give up. If we exercise our liberty in such a way as to bring destruction to a brother then we are not only doing wrong by the brother but we are sinning against Christ.
- There a couple of possible ways to understand verse eleven which all surround the implications of the word perish. In either case I don't believe that the actions of the insensitive brother has undone that which Christ may have done for the brother with the weaker conscience. I don't think that we have a person here whom Christ has purchased and made part of the elect only to have our foolish actions undo all of Christ's work. Therefore, we either see the word perish as something like "stumble" (which this is hard to get out the Greek word) or we must understand this brother as someone who is in the covenant people of Christ but as one who is not Elect. The words are very strong and specific in these verses yet I believe we understand them similarly to other verses like Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:29.
- The conclusion to the matter, is that we are instructed to give up our "rights" if it means that the conscience of a weaker brother will be troubled. This giving up of rights is setting the stage for the next chapter where Paul will discuss giving up his rights as an Apostle.