

## I Corinthians Lesson 08

I Cor. Chapter 8

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Memory verses for this week: *1 Pet 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 1 Pet 3:11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*

**Introduction:** Last week in Chapter 7, Paul explained how that we are to conduct ourselves both as single and married adults. There were many rules laid out, but Paul wanted us to know that whatever state we were in, either single or married, our focus should be on serving the Lord. This week, we talk about some of the limitations we should learn to live under concerning our Christian liberty.

### I. Meats, and the Limitation of Christian Liberty

*1 Cor 8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*

In Corinth, as was the custom in many of the cities during this time, animals were offered in sacrifice to idols. Of course, when you start a fire and place the animal on the fire, it may or may not be totally consumed. Many times there were large portions of the meat undamaged, and this was sold to be eaten.

It was a solemn thing to be a Christian in those days. Idolatrous paganism was touching nearly every home in some way. Meat which had been offered to idols was sold in the public market, and then served at social functions. If Christians were present in these meetings, they had to decide as to whether they would eat meat that had been offered to idols. Paul sets before them two motives that could serve as guides in making a decision in these matters.

Among the Corinthian Christians, there was evidently a considerable difference of opinion as to whether believers should or should not partake of such meat. Verse 1 says that “we have all knowledge.” This is not implying that we know everything there is that can be known, but is speaking of how we have knowledge of certain basic facts. One of those facts is listed in verse 4 where it states that there is none other God but one. Although we may have much knowledge, that is of little use unless it is applied unto wisdom.

If we look strictly at knowledge, it will puff us up as the scripture states. But when we season knowledge with love, it builds us up. When we are known as people of love, we build up one another and the church becomes a place that others want to be involved in. Love is so much more to be desired than knowledge. “Charity” when used in the bible means love.

*1 Cor 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.  
1 Cor 13:2 And 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, and have not charity, I am nothing.  
1 Cor 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

The Corinthians had raised the issue of eating things that had been offered in sacrifice to idols. The meat in question, was brought to the heathen temples and offered to their idols, then it was taken to the market place and sold. If a Christian bought some of this meat to eat, was it a sin? If a Christian was invited to the home of another, should he eat the meat if he knows it had previously been offered to an idol? Should he inquire of the host, as to whether the meat had been offered to an idol? This lesson might not seem to be relevant for our day, but it really is. There are many doubtful things today, that can be decided on the basis of this chapter.

*1 Cor 8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*

This verse really drives home the point that we don't really know much until we think "we know it all." I don't know exactly when that is, but there is a time right after we are saved that is a dangerous time. We are so excited about being saved, we want to reach everyone for the Lord. Unfortunately, we don't have the wisdom to rightly divide the scriptures, and many times offend others with our righteous attitude. But after years of study, and much tribulation, we learn patience and how to reach others for the Lord Jesus Christ. As we grow older, we have to constantly renew our enthusiasm to reach the lost that we had when we first experienced salvation. We are commanded to "renew our minds" daily. When we draw close to the Lord, study our bibles faithfully, we truly begin to learn things "as we ought to know." We have so much that we need to learn.

*Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

*1 Cor 8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.*

There is imperfection of just having knowledge, but there is perfection of love. There are two things that every person needs to know. He needs to know the will of God. It is necessary to know the will of God, before we can do the will of God. Also he needs to know the word of God. It is impossible to know the will of God without knowing the word of God. Love for God will cause us to want to

know both. Love will cause us to want to know the will of God and to do the will of God.

If you have the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart, and you are being led by the Holy Spirit, your life will be so radically different from those in the world that you will definitely be known as a Christian. If we are never known for our relationship with Christ, we are surely not leading the separated, consecrated life that God desires for every born again believer.

*Prov 20:11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.*

*Heb 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.*

*Heb 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.*

*Heb 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

*Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,*

*Heb 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

*Heb 6:3 And this will we do, if God permit.*

We are to go on in our maturity to much more than just knowing the doctrines. We need not a headful of knowledge, but a life transformed by the application of the scriptures. Hearing and doing are very, very different.

*Job 42:3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.*

*Job 42:4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.*

## **II. Paul's Answer Concerning Things Offered in Sacrifice to Idols**

*1 Cor 8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.*

*1 Cor 8:5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)*

Knowledge, and the Word of God, teaches the Christian that an idol is nothing.

As Christians, we know there is but one God. Not Allah, not Buddha, but the great God Jehovah that was revealed to man in the Old Testament of the Bible. There are many “gods” in this life that people follow after, but only one true GOD. The people at Athens did not know the one and only true God, but Paul took that opportunity to declare unto the people the God we serve.

*Acts 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.*  
*Acts 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.*  
*Acts 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;*  
*Acts 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;*  
*Acts 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;*  
*Acts 17:27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:*  
*Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*  
*Acts 17:29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.*  
*Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*

In his commentary on I Corinthians, J. Vernon McGee had these insights about the meats offered to idols.

“After you have come to Christ, after you have the Word of God, you know that an idol is nothing. That is the way Paul spoke of the idols—they are nothing. There is but one God. So he says that the meat that was offered to the idol was not affected. Nothing happened to it. It was not contaminated. In fact, it was prime meat. So the instructed Christian could go there to get his meat and eat it with no problem. These idols were merely called gods. As I stood in the ruins of the temple of Apollo in Corinth, I thought of this passage of Scripture. I thought of all the sacrifices that had been offered to that image of Apollo there. It was nothing. The meat was brought in to the idol, put there for a little while, and then it was taken to the meat shop. It didn't make any difference in the meat—the idol was nothing. The instructed Christian knew that. He knew there is but one God, the Father, and that there is but one Lord Jesus Christ. He made all things, and all things belong to Him.”

*1 Cor 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and*

*we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

God can provide applied knowledge to the mature Christian. The mature Christian understands that there is only one true God. All idols are the inventions of men and idols have not life and can give no life. Therefore the mature Christian could eat this meat that had been left over from the idol sacrifices without any harm being done to his own life.

Verse 6 says there is but one God. Until we come to this understanding about God, we truly know nothing. In John's account of the gospel, he tells us that all things were made by our Lord Jesus Christ.

*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*John 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.*

*John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

*John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

Did God, the Father exist alone until Jesus came as was born of a woman there in Bethlehem? Absolutely not. The Everlasting God that we served was always a three part trinity, separate but yet one. When God decided to create man, He said "Let us create man in our image." Who was the "our" image? It was speaking of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*Gen 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

*Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

*1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

As Christians, we need to know that we were made by Him and for Him, and as children of God, we are in Him.

*2 Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

*2 Cor 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*

*2 Cor 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

*2 Cor 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did*

*beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

*2 Cor 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

*1 Cor 8:7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.*

We that know God are truly privileged to have this knowledge. Verse 7 says that not every man has this knowledge. Some of those who were saved there in Corinth had come from an idolatrous past, and were having problems with this issue. Deep down, they knew an idol was nothing, but they could not seem to break away from them completely as they thought of them as evil deities. If one of those Christians eat that meat sacrificed to an idol, they would feel they had committed a sin and “their conscience being weak is defiled.”

An idol is just that. A false idol that means nothing. Satan can use almost anything to cause us to worship a false idol. It does not have to be a statue of gold or silver. It could be a set of fine golf clubs, or a shotgun that we use to hunt each week rather than going to church. It could be our own belly if we are not careful. We can get so wrapped up in the day to day life, that we live for the day. But whatever drags us down, we need to free ourselves from those associations and serve the true and living God.

*Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*

*Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*Heb 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

One of the greatest of the Old Testament saints, Daniel, refused to eat the meat from the King's table. Perhaps he thought it might have been offered to an idol, or perhaps that type of meat was one that was forbidden for an Israelite to eat. But he purposed in His heart to live a life that glorified God.

*Dan 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*

*1 Cor 8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the*

*better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.*

There is much difference in the knowledge of the immature Christian compared to those who understand the meat of the word. The immature Christians were unable to make this distinction between what they ate and their service to God. Food does not affect our relationship to God.

Verse 8 puts the whole issue in perspective. In no way is meat going to commend us to God.... Neither the eating of it or the refusal to eat it. We are neither the better nor the worse for eating. Meat has nothing to do one way or the other with our standing before God.

### **III. Christian Liberty – Where do we Draw the Line?**

*1 Cor 8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

In matters that seem totally immaterial such as this issue of eating meats sacrificed to idols, we certainly are given liberty by God to do whatever we choose. This comes down to personal convictions as to these minor things. However, the believer need to be careful so that we do not put a stumbling block in front of a weaker brethren. You have others watching your life, and they may not have a solid knowledge of the freedom Jesus gives us.

*1 Cor 8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;*

*1 Cor 8:11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?*

Paul uses an example of Christian liberty being used to the extent that it leads a weak brother astray. This example shows the weaker brother seeing the meat in the idol's temple. The stronger brother understands that an idol is nothing and he is at liberty to eat the meat with a clear conscience. Since the weaker brother does not have this knowledge, this cause him to be led astray. It is good that Jesus died for both the weak and the strong. And our love for one another should drive us to be careful to not do things in front of others that might be offended.

Paul told the Corinthians to beware of becoming a stumblingblock to those who were unsound in biblical knowledge. If we use our liberty in the wrong way, it could cause another person to stumble.

*Gal. 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for*

*an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

*Rom. 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. 2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. 3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.*

As mature Christians, we should be careful what we do and where we go. Our testimony of conduct may help or hinder someone. Israel was seduced by going to the wrong place.

*Num. 25:2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.*

In other places the Bible enforces the idea that idol temples and food offered to idols should be avoided.

*Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*

*Acts 21:25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.*

Verse 11 discusses the awful consequence of being a stumblingblock. Paul did not teach that the weak brother would fall from grace and be lost, but he meant that his testimony and life would perish.

*1 Cor 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*

*1 Cor 8:13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

When we exercise our Christian liberty to the extent that we put a stumblingblock in the path of the weaker Christian, we are doing wrong. Even the lost watch our lives, and they want to see a difference in a Christian's life. Our talk and our walk ought to be much different than it was before Christ saved us. Paul says that if eating meat offends my brother, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth. Paul was willing to forgo some of his liberty for the edification of the brethren. If someone you know is offended by certain things that are permissible in your convictions, we need to do our best to never do those things where it might lead the weaker to fail. Jesus paid a debt that we could not pay. Thanks be to God, we are no longer under the law, but are free because Jesus



fulfilled the law.

*Mat 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

*Rom 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

*Rom 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

As mature Christians we need to beware of sinning against Christ. When we hinder a weak brother, we sin against Christ.

*Matt. 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Paul's testimony presents a pattern of conduct worthy of following.

A note on idolatry. "Idolatry originally meant the worship of idols, or the worship of false gods by means of idols, but came to mean among the Old Testament Hebrews any worship of false gods, whether by images or otherwise, and finally the worship of Jehovah through visible symbols (Hos. 8:5-6; 10:15); and ultimately in the New Testament idolatry came to mean, not only the giving to any creature or human creation the honor or devotion which belonged to God alone, but the giving to any human desire a precedence over God's will.

As Christians, we need to learn what is scriptural fact and not a tradition that we are following. This may seem like a minor issue, but in Paul's day it was large. There are many issues that are much like this in church today, and it comes down to personal convictions about what we should or should not do. We certainly should consider others and how our actions may impact them.

While we should follow our convictions on these issues, we should respect others and not expect everyone to follow every conviction that we may have. That is what the Christian liberty was all about. Glorifying the Lord with our bodies, and living a free life that can be used by God in His service. Not a life weighted down like the Jews had been by dozens of rules and laws that were complicated even more by over 700 new 'laws' by the Pharisees. Follow Christ's teaching, and you will fulfill the law and honor God.

*Mat 22:36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

*Mat 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

*Mat 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.*

*Mat 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as*

*thyself.*

*Mat 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

Brother Bynum at the close of his lessons put 10 questions to us to consider in application of this week's lesson.

In our present society we are not faced with the eating of meat that has been offered to idols. If any thing however, we face problems more complex. Paul's guide lines for deciding on the eating of meat offered to idols, will also work on most of our problems today.

If you are wondering if a certain habit or act is a sin, take out the word meat in 1 Cor. 8, and put in the name of your habit or act. Will your habit, amusement, or pleasure be a stumblingblock to someone else? Most people who ask if a certain thing is a sin, in their heart already know the answer. They are hoping that someone will give them an answer that will justify their action. Let us try the test to smoking, since some people insist that it is alright. (1 Cor. 8:13) *Wherefore, if (smoking) make my brother to offend, I will (smoke no more) while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.* Try this same thing on other habits or acts.

\* Notes from E. L. Bynum added in June 2013

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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