

I CORINTHIANS
Chapter 8:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

Within this chapter, Paul answered their questions about **"things offered unto idols."** When an animal had been offered as a sacrifice to a god, part of the sacrifice was consumed by fire upon the altar. Often the meat would be served to friends in the temple area. Other times he would take some of the meat home for his family and friends to eat. If the animal had been offered as a general public sacrifice, much of the meat would later be sold in the market -**10:25**.

This kind of situation caused a problem. The question was - could a Christian buy and eat the meat that had been offered to idols? Could he go to someone's home where such meat would be served?

The Corinthians had several different opinions concerning this issue which caused confusion. Some of the members said they could do so without hurting their Christian testimony, whereas others believed it was a sin to eat this meat. Therefore, the church wrote to Paul about this problem.

The church wanted a yes or no answer to this complex situation. Instead of a yes or no answer Paul replied by giving principles that must be applied to each specific situation. In the area of morals (lying, stealing, adultery), God's Word gives a definite answer between right and wrong. The **"meat"** question, however, belongs to the area of the liberties of a child of God.

The right or wrong in eating such meat is not found in the meat itself or in eating it. It really makes no difference; either way it would be all right. The question of sin is introduced by the motivation behind the eating and by the consequences of eating it. Therefore, Paul had to present the principles of grace that stood in sharp contrast both to a firm legalism, "do or don't", and to a selfish individualism, "Nobody can tell me what to do".

One thing that you will quickly learn among Christians is not everyone agrees on what is right and wrong. For some, the matter may be black and white, and to others it may be gray. One may feel that a person should not go to a certain place, whereas another sees nothing wrong with it. One may feel that doing a certain thing is wrong while another sees nothing wrong with it at all. The same was true in the church at Corinth. This was a matter in which some felt very strongly about it while others thought nothing about it at all. It had to do with meat that had been offered to idols: **"Now as touching things offered unto idols..." - 8:1.**

The Corinthian's were a people that worshiped many gods. They had a god for just about anything you could imagine. There was a god of love, a god of war, a god for travel, etc. Involved in this polytheistic - (many gods), society were the sacrifices offered to these gods. These sacrifices were for the purposes of appeasing their gods and finding favor with them.

There were some members of the church that felt it was wrong to eat such meat because it had been dedicated to a pagan god. On the other hand there were those in the church that said it was just meat and nothing wrong with eating it. Who was right? Was it

wrong to eat such meat or was it acceptable? Again, each had their own opinion. Who was right was the question Paul begins to answer in **chapter eight**.

In our day we are not worried about whether or not we should eat meat dedicated to idols. We don't have to worry about going to McDonald's and having to decide which meat is Grade-A or Idol-D (Dedicated). But we are faced with the same situation in other issues. There are so many things today that are accepted by many church members that the Bible does not name individually and call them right or wrong. Therefore, these things are accepted as being all right and are done to the detriment of the spiritual growth of the weaker Christian who feels these issues are wrong and sinful.

How do we determine what is right or wrong when the Bible does not specifically give a yes or no answer? In - **chapter 8** Paul gives us some principles to help us make decisions in the areas that are not black and white. Some take the liberties and strive to prove their point by saying, "we are under grace and not the Law". Therefore, Paul deals with these issues not saying what is black, what is white or what is gray, but what harm will it do to a younger Christians

VERSE 1-6:

The first thing which always must be done is to turn to God's Word and see if God has anything definite to say about the matter. In - **verses 1-7** Paul uses the word - **knowledge**" three times and the words - **"knoweth," "know,"** and **"known"** 6 times. He is placing great emphasis on something that is known or can be known. The knowledge that He refers to is a knowledge given by God's Word.

There were some in the Corinthian Church who felt they had greater knowledge when it came to the things of God; therefore Paul said in - **verse 1**, **"...we know that we all have knowledge."** Furthermore, he warned about the danger of knowledge and it could make one haughty instead of humble - **"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."** If we are not careful, our spiritual knowledge can go to the head instead of the heart. We all have met Christians with big heads instead of big hearts.

But as Paul discusses this knowledge, he speaks of how this knowledge is spiritually enlightening. He speaks of those who have grown spiritually and learned certain truths about the matter before them. For one thing, this knowledge had informed them that there was nothing to an idol - **"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" - 8:4.**

The word - **"nothing"** means an "insignificant person or a nobody". An idol is not a him or her, but an it. Idols are not living personalities, but inanimate objects made of wood, stone, or metal. They are nothing more than an image reflecting the imagination of the one who designed it. Idols are not gods but only called gods - **"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)" - 8:5.**

Paul is telling us that it is by the study of God's Word that we learn about God and what He demands, decrees, and desires. It is by the study of God's Word that we learn what is right and wrong. Judges and Washington D.C. are not the final authority on what is right and wrong. The Bible alone shows us what is right and wrong! Our morals and convictions are not determined by an opinion poll, but by the Word of God. Our standards and morals are

not determined by resolutions passed on the House or Senate floor, but by what God says in His Word. Therefore, the Bible is the standard by which we should judge any situation. We must always ask, "What does God say about it?" Is there a clear yes or no of the practice or procedure in the Bible? Has God clearly said that it is wrong?

To a knowledgeable Christian an idol is nothing. So meat offered to idols had no significance to them. When offered to an idol ceremoniously and then sold in the market to the general public, they were simply meats. To a Christian buying such food, without even asking if, or considering if, it was offered once ceremoniously to an idol, the meat gave no offence. Those who had grown and gain this knowledge could scoff, as does the inspired prophet in - **Isaiah 44:9, 10**. Also note - **Isaiah 44:14-18**.

There is only one true God, others are not gods and should not be considered as gods. So says - **I Corinthians 8:8**. My standing with God does not depend on whether I eat this or that kind of meat, or none at all. Being a good Christian is far more than simply following a set of rules. It is a heart matter of devoted love and obedience to God and love for others.

VERSE 7:

There were some who had been saved out of pagan worship and had strong convictions about having any involvement with their past life. To them eating meat offered unto idols was participating in pagan worship. As they saw it to them it would be a sin. Therefore to eat such meat was once again being a part of pagan worship.

To eat such meat their - **"conscience being weak is defiled"**. The word - **"defiled"** spoke of that which is "polluted." A **"defiled"** or polluted conscience is one filled with guilt. To eat the meat, as has been shown was not a sin, but to such a person it was and left them feeling guilty and dirty if they did so.

Paul's point was certain things may not be a sin and would not be wrong for a child of God to do, but it may not be best for him to do it in light of how it could hurt a weaker brother.

There were some who had matured in their spiritual knowledge and had come to the understanding that there would be nothing wrong in eating such meat, there were some that were not as mature and had not come to such an understanding.

In light of those that were weaker, Paul gives us another principle to help us to determine what is right or wrong. It is a principle that involves other people. As we saw in - **verse 1** Paul states that knowledge could make one boastful, but love will make one compassionate.

In **verse 3** he says - **"But if any man love God, the same is known of him."** A love for God is shown in and through a person. It is obvious in their life, that one who loves God also loves what God loves. That which God loves above all else is us, and a person who loves God will love others.

Knowledge and love must work together. What a believer ought to do should take precedence over what he wants to do, and what he knows he can do. He must act responsibly toward God, before the family of God and within society - **10:31-32; Romans 14:7**.

VERSE 8-9:

Paul warned - **"take heed"**, the believer with the strong conscience is not to exercise his right, **"liberty"** or authority" if it became a hindrance to the spiritual growth of the Christian with the weak conscience. The real issue in Christian **"liberty"** is the effect that it has on other people - **Romans 14:13**.

Paul says that eating meat has nothing to do with one's relationship to God. The pagan worshippers felt that such offerings would bring them favor and to eat such meat brought them closer to their gods. But again, Paul says eating such meat means nothing to our relationship with God.

But, although it would not be wrong to eat such meat, there were those who felt differently and to do so could be a hindrance to their Christian life. The word **"stumblingblock"** refers to putting a stone in a path that would cause a person to trip or fall. Paul was saying that it might not be wrong to eat such meat, but doing so could discourage and cause a weaker Christian to stumble and fall.

The principle Paul gives reminds us that the Christian life is not a personal matter. There are some things that might not be wrong for a Christian to do and some places that might not be wrong for a Christian to go. But, the real issue is not "can we" but "should we" and how will my doing it affect a weaker Christian.

When it comes to questionable areas, apply the test of whether or not it will hurt or hinder others in their Christian life.

Verses 10-13:

In this illustration - **8:10-13**, Paul showed how the exercise of liberty could harm a spiritual brother. A Christian who knew that there is only one God and that idols are nothing - **"thee which hast knowledge"**, attended a banquet within the pagan temple and ate meat from animals that had been sacrificed to that idol. He did not see anything wrong in his actions. However, a spiritual brother who was a weak Christian and still believed in the reality of idols saw what was done. This **"brother"** was **"emboldened"** or encouraged to follow the example of the strong Christian. He must have figured that if the strong believer could do it, then it must be all right.

However, when the weak Christian ate the food he felt that he had sinned because he was doing the same thing that he had done before he was saved. Thus - **"he perished"**, through the haphazard use of liberty by the stronger brother.

The reckless use of liberty actually violates the purpose for which Christ died - **8:11b**. If Christ died to deliver men from sin, why should Christians use their freedom to lead others into sin?

Also, since Christ gave up His rights when He became man - **Philippians 2:5, 11**, should not Christians also give up their rights in order to help their brothers?

VERSES 10-13:

A Christian actually sins when he causes his brother to sin - **8:12**. Ultimately, a - **"sin against a brother"** is a **"sin against Christ."** Believers are inseparable members of Christ's body - **"of his flesh, and of his bones"** - **Ephesians 5:30**. Reckless use of liberty actually - **"wound"**, which means "to strike vigorously" the weak conscience. It discourages and frustrates him; it destroys his confidence in the loving concern of others.

Christ told His disciples to remove that which offends - **Matthew 5:29-30; 17:27; 18:6-9**. To avoid offending his Christian brother, Paul chose not to use his right of eating sacrificial meat. His declaration is extremely emphatic. He used the double negative here. "I will absolutely not eat meat." He further was prepared to make it a permanent decision - **"while the world standeth"**. His liberty was not a life-compelling force; rather, he controlled it so that it would never hinder the spiritual growth of his brother. Christians today should do likewise.

When it comes to the gray areas of the Christian life, we should ask:

- 1) Is it scripturally denied?
- 2) Is it spiritually discouraging?
- 3) Is it socially damaging?

I CORINTHIANS 8:1-13
Study Guide

1. What questions does Paul answer in this chapter? _____?
2. The church wanted a yes or no answer but how did Paul answer?
3. When the Bible does not give a yes or no answer what are we to do?
4. What is the first thing a child of God is to do when seeking an answer about something being right or wrong? What if the Bible does not give a yes or no answer, what is the next thing to consider?
5. As a child of God, how do we learn what is wrong and right and what the demands of God are?
6. What does the word "defiled" mean?
7. As an older and more learned Christian something may not be wrong within itself but how does it affect a _____.
8. A love for God is shown in and through a person. It is obvious in their life, that one who _____ also _____ what _____.
9. What a believer _____ to do should take precedence over what he _____ to do, and what he knows he _____.
10. Paul warned - **"take heed"**, the believer with the strong conscience is not to exercise his _____, **"liberty"** or authority" if it became a _____ to the spiritual growth of the Christian with the weak conscience.
11. The real issue in Christian **"liberty"** is the _____ that it has on other _____.
12. What does the word "stumblingblock" mean? Have you ever been a stumblingblock? Names some stumblingblocks!
13. When it comes to questionable areas, apply the test of whether or not it will _____ or _____ others in their Christian life.
14. A Christian actually _____ when he causes his brother to _____.
15. When it comes to the gray areas of the Christian life, we should ask:
 - a) Is it _____ denied?
 - b) Is it _____ discouraging?
 - c) Is it _____ damaging?