

Freedom, Love, and Unity in Disputable Matters

Series: First Corinthians

Bible Text(s) Used:

1 Corinthians 8ⁱ; Romans 14:1ⁱⁱ; 1 Corinthians 6:12ⁱⁱⁱ

Summary

In this message, Pastor Bo walked us through a powerful and practical teaching from 1 Corinthians 8. The church in Corinth was divided over a sensitive issue—whether it was permissible to eat meat that had been sacrificed in pagan temples. Some believers understood that idols were nothing and that the meat itself was harmless. Others, especially newer Christians who had come out of pagan worship, felt deeply troubled by it. What seemed like freedom to one believer felt like compromise to another.

Paul’s answer was not simply about food—it was about love. He reminded the church that knowledge by itself can lead to pride, but love builds others up. While Christians may have liberty (freedom in Christ), that liberty must always be guided by concern for others. The real question is not merely, “Am I allowed to?” but “Is this helpful?” and “Will this build up my brother or sister in Christ?”

Christian Freedom Must Be Guided by Love

Paul acknowledged that idols are nothing and that believers possess knowledge. Yet he warned that exercising freedom without love can wound another person’s conscience. A conscience is the inner moral awareness God

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places within us—an internal sense of right and wrong shaped by both God’s design and the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives. Even if something is not sinful in itself, it may still be harmful if it causes another believer to stumble.

Pastor Bo reminded us that spiritual maturity is not proven by how many liberties we claim, but by how deeply we love others. True maturity asks, “How will my choices affect someone else?” Paul even said he would give up meat entirely if it meant protecting a fellow believer’s faith.

Reflection Question: Are there freedoms in my life that I need to reconsider for the sake of someone else?

We Must Ask ‘Should I?’ Not Just ‘May I?’

In disputable matters—areas where Scripture does not give a direct command—we must move beyond seeking permission. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:12 that while all things may be lawful, not all things are beneficial. The better question is whether something helps us grow spiritually or whether it begins to master us.

A habit may not be labeled as sin, but if it controls our emotions, consumes our attention, or replaces our devotion to Christ, it becomes spiritually dangerous. The believer’s body and life belong to the Lord. Therefore, wisdom requires us to evaluate whether something strengthens our walk with Christ or weakens it.

Reflection Question: Is there any habit or activity in my life that may not be sinful but is not spiritually beneficial?

Our Witness Matters More Than Our Rights

Perhaps the most compelling reminder of the message was this: when we follow Christ, we wear His name. We represent Jesus in our words, our actions, and even our online presence. The phrase “I don’t care what people think about me” cannot guide a believer’s life, because our witness reflects on Christ Himself.

The issue in Corinth was never really about meat—it was about people. It was about unity in a diverse church. The body of Christ is made up of believers at different stages of spiritual growth. We must never slam our own hand in the door by wounding another member of the body. Instead, we are called to build one another up.

Reflection Question: How can I better represent Christ in my daily choices and interactions?

Closing Thought

This message calls us to examine our hearts. Freedom in Christ is a beautiful gift, but love is the greater calling. When we allow the Holy Spirit to search us, guide our habits, and shape our attitudes, we become a church marked by grace, unity, and humility. May we always choose love over pride, unity over division, and witness over personal rights. In doing so, we reflect the heart of Jesus to a watching world.

ⁱ **Food Offered to Idols - 8** Now concerning^[a] food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. ² If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³ But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.^[b] ⁴ Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. ...

ⁱⁱ **14** As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

ⁱⁱⁱ ¹² “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will