

# Love's Freedom

Christopher Alton  
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*Watch/listen again*

In this message we consider the issue arising amongst the Corinthians about whether to eat meat which had been offered to idols in the pagan temples, but which was really about what they were to do with their newfound freedom in Christ. We consider the key differences between Love's Freedom and the world's freedom, and the implications for how we live out God's Kingdom culture in this present age, to a watching world waiting for God's children to be revealed (Ro 8:19).



## Bible Verses

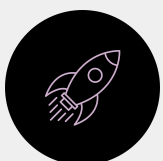
Read 1 Corinthians 8-10

Focus verses – Mt 15:11-20, 1 Co 6:12, 1 Co 8:1 and 1 Co 10:23-24



## Background

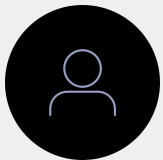
- These chapters deal with the issue arising in Corinth over food offered to idols in the Corinthians temples.
- Trade guilds around Corinth incorporated this aspect of pagan life into their social gatherings, making it a tricky issue for believers to navigate.
- Meat taken to the pagan temples was usually split into 3 parts, some was burnt as an offering to the temple's god on the altar, some given to the priests to eat, and occasionally some given back to the worshipper to eat at home. The priests often had too much meat, so much of this found its way to the marketplace for sale. Some of this meat was being used by unbelievers in their home to entertain guests, which left some of the Corinthian believers in a quandary about whether it was right for them to eat it, even if they did so unawares.
- Other believers in the church knew that this meat couldn't defile them (Mt 15:11-20), but this knowledge had caused them to become 'puffed up' (1 Co 8:1) and feel superior to those who didn't think it was okay to eat this meat. So, it was another issue bringing division amongst them.



## Key Takeaways

- It perhaps surprised them that Paul didn't take sides. Instead, he showed them that the greater principle at work here was the importance of love over knowledge.

- In their newfound freedom some of the Corinthians had lost sight of their brothers and sisters. Knowledge had puffed them up, but Paul told them that instead love would build them all up! (1 Co 8:1)
- Although the issue here was about meat sacrificed to idols, as usual Paul highlights the deeper issue, teaching the Corinthians what to do with the freedom God had given them – Love’s Freedom.
- In the message we contrasted Love’s Freedom with the world’s:
  - **Liberating not limiting** – sin restricts our choice by dominating us (1 Co 6:12). Love doesn’t!
  - **Constructive not constrictive** – knowledge can make us look good and be used to bring others down, but it doesn’t help us to grow into our full stature as children of God (see 1 Co 8:1 in J B Phillips paraphrase).
  - **Body-minded not body-blinded** – self blinds us to the body, by making it difficult to see beyond our own needs. Love’s freedom means He becomes the centre of our world again – His body comes into full view, because loving His body means loving Him!



## Questions

- Consider any areas of life where you’ve seen sin try to dominate you or others around you. How did it limit your/their choices, and what do you think can help to find a path out of it?
- What do you think about the believers Paul describes as having a ‘weak conscience’ (1 Co 8:10)?
- Have you ever placed some restriction on your own choices and behaviour in order to help a brother or sister’s conscience (1 Co 8:13)? Perhaps considering some modern-day idol equivalents.
- Why do you think Paul gave up his right to expect financial support from the Corinthian church (1 Co 9:12)?
- What do you think was the ‘prize’ Paul was seeking (1 Co 9:24-27; see also Col 1:28-29)? What could be the implications for each of us?



## Actions

- Spend some time sharing your personal takeaways from the message.
- Discuss how you got on with the above questions, making space for everyone to share.
- Share as openly as you feel comfortable, but appropriately, about any personal experiences that you can relate to the questions above.
- Describe any experiences where you’ve seen the principle of love triumphing over puffed-up knowledge or self-promotion?
- Spend some time thanking God for the freedom we have in Christ, and asking Him to help us live from the operative principle of His love in everything we do (1 Co 16:14).