

The Beauty of Christian CommUNITY

Studies in the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

“The Responsible Use of Christian Liberty”

Introduction: Can Christians eat food sacrificed to idols? The question is a question of the freedoms or rights we have because of salvation in Christ. We have liberty in Christ, but we must use our liberty responsibly.

I. Exercise Your Right to Love One Another (1 Corinthians 8:1-3)

- a. This term “puffed up” is used several times in the Corinthian Correspondence and describes an arrogant attitude. Love builds up. Actions should always be filtered through love. Love is unconditional and sacrificial (1 John 4:7-11). Some Corinthians were acting like they had some theological knowledge that set them apart from less informed believers.
- b. We prove we love God by obeying His commandments (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37-38; John 14:15-21; 1 John 5:1-5). Knowledge was exalted and highly esteemed in Hellenistic culture. Paul sets the premise that love is superior to knowledge.

II. There is Only One True and Living God (1 Corinthians 8:4-6)

- a. Monotheism, the belief in one God, is explicitly taught in Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29). Idolatry is an abomination (Deuteronomy 5:7-10). Ancient Israel was punished for idolatry (Hosea 1:2, 3:1-3).
- b. Pagan cultures often attributed natural phenomenon to spiritual beings that they worshipped as gods. They often worship a pantheon (group of gods that existed in some form of family or hierarchy).
- c. God the Father and Christ Jesus both have titles of divinity, participated in the act of creation, and are the source of and reason for our life. This is a mystery but there is overwhelming biblical data that confirms that our One God is three Persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

III. Are You Strong Enough to Consider those Weak in the Faith (1 Corinthians 8:7-13)

- a. The weak did not have the knowledge to understand that regardless of how many so-called gods existed they amount to nothing (vain, useless, worthless). When they eat food offered to idols they violate their conscience (moral injury).

- b. Animal sacrifices originate in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:21). People blinded by Satan and perpetuating pagan religions violated God's standards for sacrifices by using unclean animals, consuming blood, slaughtering animals in forbidden ways, and worst of all sacrificing to devils (false gods). The Law of Moses forbid Israel from participating in pagan worship. The common view among scholars is that the weak were conservative Jewish converts who restricted themselves from engaging in anything that resembled idolatry and somewhat adhered to traditional Old Covenant habits. The strong are believed to be Gentile converts and liberal Jewish converts who leaned into freedom from Old Covenant restrictions.
- c. On the one hand, food is irrelevant to our spiritual condition. Jesus declared all food clean (Mark 7:19) God created food to be received with thanksgiving because it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4:3-5). Your diet has no bearing on your salvation. On the other hand, we have liberty in Christ but we must consider how our behavior affects our family (Romans 14:1).
- d. Paul warns the so-called strong believers that their irresponsible use of liberty is a sin against their fellow believer and ultimately a sin against Christ. Jesus identifies closely with His people and counts offenses against them as offenses against Him (Acts 9). Paul makes an extreme statement to emphasize the importance of avoiding causing a fellow believer to stumble. Paul does not necessarily take sides, but as his argument unfolds he is not encouraging people to eat food sacrificed to idols. He makes a strong case for avoiding eating in pagan temples and having fellowship with devils (1 Corinthians 10).

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Romans 5:6–11 NKJV).

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