

**GROW**  
**Liberty and Love**  
**1 Corinthians 8 - 9**

I don't know if you have noticed this or not, but Paul has already spent a lot of time talking with these Corinthians about the SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE and FREEDOMS that they have in Christ. Sadly, rather than receiving these things as precious gifts that all saints have, they viewed them as **personal RIGHTS and special PRIVILEGES** that somehow made them superior to other people. Paul was determined to set them right about that attitude! There was a mindset of IMMATURITY that was driven by PRIDE and SELFISHNESS. I'm glad that WE are not like that! :/ Right.

Over the next 3 chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses the issue of how we OUGHT to view the LIBERTY that we have been in Christ by grace, and the truth about how those liberties must be brought into check by a proper demonstration of the LOVE of Christ! In other words, if LOVE and LIBERTY somehow come into a direct confrontation with one another in our lives, LOVE must WIN.

**Love outranks liberty.**

**\*Love BUILDS OTHERS up. . 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 NIV**

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But **knowledge puffs up while love builds up.** **2** Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. **3** But whoever loves God is known by God.

-Love makes knowledge a treasure to be SHARED rather than a power to be PARADED! [Well-taught Christians that are mean, selfish, proud, & judgmental]

\*Christ chose to be more defined by love than by his liberties! [He is GOD!]

KEY ISSUE in Corinth: Eating meat sacrificed to Idols. [Religious Vs. Moral Issues?]

**\*MODERN EXAMPLES: R-Rated Movies, Fashion, Drinking alcohol**

-Love doesn't ASSUME. **1 Corinthians 8:(4-)7 NIV ["Idols are nothing!]**  
**7** But **not everyone possesses this knowledge.** Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is **defiled.**

\*Never assume that everyone around you knows the truth about Christ!

-Love cares more about preserving FAMILY than it does about protecting rights.

**1 Corinthians 8:9 NIV**

**9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.**

\*Love is CAREFUL = "to look, see," usually implying more especially an intent, earnest contemplation, is rendered "take heed"

-THINK AHEAD about how your actions may affect other Christians!

\*A **Stumbling Block** = An **obstacle** over which one trips, an **OFFENSE.**

-SAD NOTES: The effect of the offense is to embolden one to violate his own conscience! **1 Corinthians 8:10 NIV**

**10** For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person **be emboldened** to eat what is sacrificed to idols?

- \*What are YOUR ACTIONS encouraging others (**building them up**) to do?
  - Contradict their convictions? (Or at least PUSH their boundaries?)
  - Act without understanding?
  - Ignore their past and their weaknesses?

\*Are your liberties leading others into TEMPTATION? STRONGHOLDS?

**1 Corinthians 8:11-12 NIV**

**11** So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. **12** When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. **13** Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, **I will never eat meat again**, so that I will not cause them to fall.

**\*Love flows out of MATURITY!**

**Romans 14:15-21 NIV**

**15** If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. **16** Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. **17** For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, **18** because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. **19** Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. **20** Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. **21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.**

-Watch out for the kind of "love" that leads you to act SELFISHLY!

-**Paul took this principle to another level in the next chapter!** [Not just meat]

**Learn to LEVERAGE your rights for the sake of love.**

**\*Paul DENIED HIMSELF certain rights for the sake of the Gospel:**

**[This is a CHOICE. No one can force you to do this!] Legalism Vs. Leverage**

-**The Right to MARRY:** Peter, Jesus's brothers, and other apostles were married.  
**9:5** Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?

-**The right to GET PAID for ministry work.**

**9:7** Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? **8** Do I

say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? **9** For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? **10** Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. **11** If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? **12** If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? **But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.** **13** Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? **14** In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

\*Paul taught that Christian Workers SHOULD receive PAY for their work.

-Life teaches this: Soldiers, Farmers, Shepherds, etc.

-The O.T. Law taught this:

"Don't muzzle the ox while he treads grain!"

Priests received part of the offerings as pay.

-Jesus taught this: Luke 10:7; Matthew 10:10 [**Sending of the 12 & 72**]

**\*Paul CASHED IN his RIGHTS for the sake of OTHERS!**

### **1 Corinthians 9:15-18 NIV**

**15** But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. **16** For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! **17** If I preach **voluntarily**, I have a reward; **if not voluntarily**, I am simply **discharging the trust** committed to me. **18** What then is **my reward**? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I **may offer it free of charge**, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

-Paul saw preaching as his **COMPELLING MISSION!** [**My Utmost - Feb. 23**]

### **MY UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST - February 23**

We somehow have the idea that a person called to the ministry is called to be different and above other people. But according to Jesus Christ, he is called to be a "doormat" for others— called to be their spiritual leader, but never their superior. Paul said, "I know how to be abased..." (Philippians 4:12). Paul's idea of service was to pour his life out to the last drop for others. And whether he received praise or blame made no difference. As long as there was one human being who did not know Jesus, Paul felt a debt of service to that person until he did come to know Him . . . Paul's understanding of how Christ had dealt with him is the secret behind his determination to serve others. "I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man..." (1 Timothy 1:13). In other words, no matter how badly others may have treated Paul, they could never have

treated him with the same degree of spite and hatred with which he had treated Jesus Christ. Once we realize that Jesus has served us even to the depths of our meagerness, our selfishness, and our sin, nothing we encounter from others will be able to exhaust our determination to serve others for His sake.

### **The BENEFITS of leveraging your rights:**

#### **\*It lends you MORAL AUTHORITY.**

-It reveals genuine INTEGRITY. [Nehemiah]

\*Paul did not have to fight perceptions that he had MIXED ministry MOTIVES!

\*Paul's refusal to accept pay actually QUALIFIED him to demand it for others!

-This has protected the ministers for centuries and freed them to better serve the unreached community and the church of God.

-It demonstrates genuine FAITH. [God will provide for my needs!]

-It PROTECTS the GRACE base of the MESSAGE.

#### **1 Corinthians 9:12 NIV**

**12** If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

\*The Gospel is a FREE GIFT of God!

#### **\*It HONORS all those for whom it is done.**

**9:19** Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. **20** To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. **21** To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.

-It is a form of EMPATHY and IDENTIFICATION.

**[Missionary mindset: HUDSON TAYLOR]**

#### **\*It GLORIFIES GOD and BEARS MUCH FRUIT.**

-People RESPOND to a COSTLY message!

-God REWARDS those who forfeit rights for the sake of the Gospel! (Vs. 22-23)

**22** To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. **23** I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

**-God knows those who serve out of love for HIM! (8:3)**

#### **MY UTMOST**

But the chief motivation behind Paul's service was not love for others but love for his Lord. If our devotion is to the cause of humanity, we will be quickly defeated and broken-hearted, since we will often be confronted with a great deal of ingratitude from other people. But if we are motivated by our love for God, no amount of ingratitude will be able to hinder us from serving one another.

## WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THIS MESSAGE?

- \*DEFINE your rights. [Fashion choices, Right to marry, to drink, to divorce]
  - Learn whether those rights are MAN MADE or GOD GIVEN. [\[Use Scripture!\]](#)
- \*Consider how the EXERCISE of those rights may BENEFIT you.
- \*Consider how the EXERCISE of those rights may HARM others.
- \*Consider how you could CASH those rights in for the sake of others.
- \*Ask GOD what HE wants you to do with those rights!
  - WILL you and I LAY DOWN our rights for Christ?

Let's pray.