

First Corinthians
Chapter Eight
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Others come first!

The appropriate daily behavior of a disciple of Jesus is discussed. Paul specifically discusses the eating of meat and how what we do may affect some other disciple.

**1Cor 8:1 “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.
1Cor 8:2 If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;
1Cor 8:3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.”**

The one defining attribute of a child of God is that he loves God. Only those whom God knows are able to love God. If we then do love God we know that we have first been loved by Him and therefore we are His children, called by Him into the family of God. What a marvelous understanding of our standing forever before God! Christianity is not about knowledge. One does not become a Christian by learning some statutes and laws and then obeying them. One becomes a Christian by God's actions. It is truly amazing that God knows me and that He still chose me! So we do not depend upon our knowledge, which can lead us astray. We depend upon our salvation only upon the fact that we love God. Having knowledge often is accompanied by pride and pride is the antithesis of a genuine Christian spirit. When Paul says that love edifies he is using a word that means erecting a building that demonstrates great character. It seems strange to say that a building has character but I think that we all know what that means. The appearance of a building conveys a lot about the builder.

2Tim 2:19 “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness.”

**1Cor 8:4 “Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.
1Cor 8:5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,
1Cor 8:6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”**

Since there is only one God there are no idols. Idols only exist in the minds of those who developed their concepts. There are many such idols and false gods that men have invented throughout time but we know the one true God, Who is the Father. There then is also only one Lord Jesus Christ. We know that we exist because He first knew us and

chose us. We know that all things came from the Father being made by Jesus. We also know that we exist for the purpose of the Father and that we exist through Jesus to the Father. What comfort this understanding brings!

1Cor 8:7 “However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

1Cor 8:8 But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.”

Even today, not everyone knows that there is only one true God. Many people believe that idols are real and so if someone tells them that the food on the table was first offered to idols, they think that it has somehow become unclean. Paul and other Christians knew that there were no idols and also that nothing we eat gives us any favor with God or brings us any shame from God. Since idols do not exist there is no way for food to have been made unclean because of it being offered to them first. It is very important for our own self-concept that we train our conscience by God’s word so that we will understand what is real and which concepts come from God and which come by way of man’s cleverness.

1Cor 8:9 “But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

1Cor 8:10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?

1Cor 8:11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.

1Cor 8:12 And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

1Cor 8:13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.”

Whatever we are doing we need to take into account the state of the conscience of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul uses eating meat as an example in these verses but the same concept should be at work in our life for anything. Some people’s consciences are damaged by seeing a Christian drinking wine with a meal. Even though we know that God allows us to drink some wine with a meal, we need to be sensitive of the conscience of our brothers and sisters. If someone is offended because I drink wine with a meal then I should not partake. As you might know, I do not drink wine with a meal for that reason and for other reasons. A basic Christian concept is “all other brothers and sisters come first”. If I flaunt my freedom then I am demonstrating a severe flaw in my character and may even not really be a Christian. I may be proud of my knowledge and thus demonstrate great weakness rather than strength. A sin against a brother is a sin against Jesus:

Acts 9:4 “and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?””

Matt 25:44 “Then they themselves also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’

Matt 25:45 “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’”

The important concept is not our own rights but the good of the brotherhood. The church is the body of Christ and how we treat members is of critical importance. It is also extremely important that the world know that we love each other more than we love ourselves so that we take care of each other.

Eph 4:14 “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

Eph 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,

Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

1Peter 4:8 “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

John 13:35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

References

1. “The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians”, John MacArthur, Moody Press, 1984.
2. “1 Corinthians”, Leon Morris, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 1985.
3. “1&2 Corinthians”, Charles Hodge, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974.
4. “The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 10, 1 Corinthians”, Regency Reference Library, 1976.