

1 Corinthians 8:1-3 Love God, love people.

1. Personal estimation v. pursuing God - what frames the discussion.
2. False idols v. One true God.
3. Personal conviction and misusing Christian liberty
4. Suffering for Christ's sake - loving God, loving people.

v.1 - now concerning things offered to idols - continuing his instruction to the Corinthian church (REF 7:1 - concerning the things of which you wrote to me) - Paul addresses something that we have tried mightily to equate to our modern condition - things offered to idols.

*most often we paint this with the broad brush of personal behavior, personal conviction all wrought out in a very popular saying among the saints: "I don't want to cause anybody stumble." -an admirable practice.

We are instructed further on this topic, deferring to the weaker conscience in Romans 14 (which we will get to) and Paul rounds out his instruction to the Corinthian church on this matter in the second half of chapter 10.

Now there is a danger of approaching this subject with the mind set that we already have this figured out. That is Paul's first point of instruction. He brings into focus our personal estimation in this matter and matters like it.

Now concerning idols: we know that we all have knowledge - yeah we do, I'm pretty smart after all. I know all about this stuff - let's just wrap it up. There are many things like this in the church - judging others, God's

providence, forgiveness, the nature and purpose of the church - all things that we all feel uniquely equipped to speak on, even those outside of the Body of Christ

But wait, there's more - Knowledge puffs up (makes us boastful, it swells us) - like blueberry girl from Willy Wonka and then you know what? We are just in the way. We have become an obstruction in our knowledge. BUT LOVE EDIFIES - comes from a word that literally means "to build a house." LOVE builds up! BTW love is more than discourse stemming from our knowledge on certain issues - LOVE is active and it is constructive - it builds up others. Instead of being focused on demonstrating how smart or knowledgeable we are.

v.2 - to the one who has it all figured out. you don't. the evidence of being incomplete, immature in our faith is an overly confident estimation of our knowledge.

v.3 - if anyone loves God this one is known by Him - which is better, to know? or to be known by God?

We must admit that our knowledge in these matters is incomplete, fragmented, or skewed by personal opinion. It ought not be, yet nevertheless we are incomplete in our understanding in this present age - yet one day our understanding will be complete.

False Idols v. One True God

v.4-5 - concerning the eating of things offered to idols -

Much like the Jewish tradition the pagan religions, worshipping the pantheon of Greek deities - sacrificed animals during their worship. One part was offered to the deity and normally burned, one part was kept by the worshipper, and one part was kept by the priest. If the priest didn't want their portion they could sell it at market to others.

This is where we go off the rails because we try to gain equivalency with other things in our lives that don't carry as much spiritual weight - we kind of chalk all matters of conviction up under this - tattoos, manners of dress, being a vegetarian/vegan, caffeine, tobacco, etc. External things that have limited impact on salvation.

A more apt comparison would be partaking in the feast of another religion.

SHOW PICTURE -

Pongal, the harvest festival celebrated in southern India dedicated to the Sun God. It is considered one of the most important Hindu festivals of the year.

Rhetorically - Would you participate in this knowing what it's about?

Paul says - an idol is nothing in the world - there is no other God but one. That is Jehovah God, the God of the Bible.

v.6 - Paul lays down some very important doctrine - we are going to kick it in to low gear to make sure we are grasping all of this properly as it is the frame for this entire discussion.

1. there is one God, the Father - the first person of the Godhead - the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. Spurgeon answers this questions in his revised 1855 catechism: God is Spirit (Joh 4:24), infinite (Job 11:7), eternal (Psa 90:2; 1Ti 1:17), and unchangeable (Jam 1:17) in His being (Exo 3:14), wisdom, power (Psa 147:5), holiness (Rev 4:8), justice, goodness, and truth (Exo 34:6-7). — and we are for Him, for His purpose and for His glory.

2. One Lord (title) - used for Jehovah in the Sept., Jesus - his name., Christ - his role, the one who was promised to redeem - the messiah.
 1. [Col 1:15-17 NKJV] 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

***ALL FOOD IS HIS!**

through whom we live - because we live through Him alone we are not under subjection, bondage, or the influence of any fabricated deities, or imaginary gods.

v. 7 - some people don't feel that way - they are convinced that food is tarnished, or polluted because of it.

This was a big deal in the church!

REV 2:14/2:20 Pergamos & Thyatira - both rebuked for putting a stumbling block before the children of Israel, eating things sacrificed to idols. Their desire to eat conquered their obligation to LOVE fellow believers.

the implication from these verses is that these churches were drawn by increment into pagan worship! they began to mingle these things with their precious faith and pollute their faith.

James and the council at Jerusalem

[Act 15:19-20 NKJV] 19 "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, 20 "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, [from] sexual immorality, [from] things strangled, and [from] blood.

They were encouraged to come out of their old lives! To be new!

It appears from Paul's letter that there was a spectrum of belief and practice at the church in Corinth. Some were saying - wait, I can go and buy this meat at a discount and eat it and I don't care if they say it's offered to an idol - that's hogwash. Others would take the same look and say "how

dare you! that's offered to Zeus" - or whoever. Their conscience was violated.

v.8 - it's not about the food - it's about the heart

[Mar 7:18-20 NKJV] 18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 "because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, [thus] purifying all foods?" 20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.

v.9-11 Personal conviction and misusing Christian liberty

The Corinthians, it appears sometimes erred in this to the point where they would just go for it without consideration of how it may impact anybody else - kinda like, if this offends you so what - I'm living out my liberty in Christ. I'm free in Christ man.

[Luk 17:1 NKJV] 1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe [to him] through whom they do come!

...because of your "knowledge," that person who is unencumbered by the superstitions of false worship knows there is no other God - but in their actions they aren't indicating a gentle spirit or a servants heart, they aren't building the other person up - they are in fact a point of stumbling a point of destruction for a precious purchased soul. They are not acting in love

because they are so fixated on fulfilling their own desire to be right and to be fat. you can be right, and you can be dead right.

v.12-13 - loving God, loving people involves suffering and putting up our weapons. AND when we wound another believer because of something superficial or non-essential we are sinning against Christ.

Finish the thought: [Luk 17:1-2 NKJV] 1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe [to him] through whom they do come! 2 "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

I told you we were going to get to it - [Rom 14:19-23 NKJV] 19 Therefore let us pursue the things [which make] for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed [are] pure, but [it is] evil for the man who eats with offense. 21 [It is] good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor [do anything] by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. 22 Do you have faith? Have [it] to yourself before God. Happy [is] he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because [he does] not [eat] from faith; for whatever [is] not from faith is sin.[Rom 15:1-2 NKJV] 1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please [his] neighbor for [his] good, leading to edification.

I will never again eat meat - looking to the building up of others, not ourselves.

-Paul Hammontree, Calvary Baton Rouge - If any "freedom" or "liberty" MIGHT cause someone to stumble, we should be glad to give it up. And, if giving up a "freedom" or "liberty" causes us to SUFFER, we should understand, SUFFERING is part of our calling, to follow Jesus. Lord, help us to live these temporary lives in light of eternity... caring more about others than we do ourselves.