

# LOVE BUILDS UP / Sunday, July 13, 2014

## Unifying Topic: LOVE BUILDS UP

### Lesson Text

I. Knowledge Puffs Up (1 Corinthians 8:1-3)

II. Consider The Weak (1 Corinthians 8:4-6)

III. Don't Be A Stumbling Block (1 Corinthians 8:7-13)

**The Main Thought:** But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak (1 Corinthians 8:9, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** What may be right for some members of a community may not be right for others. How are community members to hold one another accountable? Paul cautioned the faithful to behave in ways that would not cause others to falter in their faith.

**Lesson Aim:** To reveal that knowledge applied in a manner that conveys the love of Christ and considerate love for each other is the goal of proper Christian behavior.

**Life Aim:** To help students live with a conscientious spirit that takes into account how others will perceive their lifestyle.

- 8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edified.  
8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.  
8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.  
8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.  
8:5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)  
8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.  
8:7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.  
8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.  
8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.  
8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;  
8:11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?  
8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.  
8:13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

### **HISTORY:**

The Corinthian believers needed help; they needed answers to questions; guidelines that would help them as they lived in the midst of a sinful and pleasure-mad world. Therefore, someone wrote Paul and asked him about meat offered to idols, about the questionable pleasure and social functions of day to day life. Paul deals directly with the Corinthian problem, but he also uses the issue and expands it to include the whole question of Christian liberty and personal rights: Can a Christian do his own thing? Is a Christian honestly set free in Christ? If not, what restraints are put upon his liberty or freedom?

The sacrifices were food offerings, symbolically presented in worship to the god of whose temple they were given. The particular issue was that of eating food that had been offered in those sacrifices. The Greeks and Romans were worshipping many gods. They had a god, or a group of gods for every circumstance, every need, and every activity: god of war; god of travel; goddess of justice etc.; thereby believing in many evil spirits. Idol offerings were divided into three parts:

1. One part was burned on the altar as the sacrifice.
2. The second part was given as payment to the priests who served at the temple and the feast that followed.
3. And the remaining part was taken home and kept by the offerer.

Because of the number of offerings, the priests were not able to eat all of their portion, so what they did not need was sold in the butcher shops and marketplaces. That meat was highly valued because it was cleansed of evil spirits, and was thus the meat served at feasts and to guests.

For the Christians, the meat symbolized the association with pagan gods and goddesses, having been part of an offering to them; and it was associated with the superstition that it had once been contaminated by evil spirits. This was an unavoidable and question for a believer who had any personal contact with Gentiles because of the social occasions of weddings and festivities of the sort that involved pagan worship held in the temples where idol food was always served. If a relative was getting married or a long-time friend was giving a banquet, a Christian either had to make excuses for not attending or if attended eat food that he knew had been part of an idol offering.

## LESSON:

### 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 Knowledge Puffs up

**8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.**

This passage concerns them touching things sacrificed to idols. The ones making the claim had more than enough knowledge and understanding of God's Word. Knowledge makes us look good and feel important, but one can easily develop a prideful know-it-all attitude. Many people with strong opinions are unwilling to listen to and learn from God and others. The Corinthian Christians were arrogant. They had knowledge without love. They knew that pagan gods and idols were not real and that food sacrificed to them was still just food. They knew that eating the food could not contaminate them spiritually, that it had no affect on their Christian lives. They felt totally free to eat whatever they wanted, no matter what others thought. Those believers having the knowledge were not mature in love. Paul says we all have knowledge, but God's knowledge, the kind needed to build the church and to build others up can be obtained only by loving God! Love edifies, or builds up others, and that edification they did not have. They were solid in doctrine but weak in love. They were strong in self-love, but weak in brotherly love. What they knew, puffed them up and did not show the love to edify (build-up) others. It is love that edifies and grows people, not knowledge

**8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.** Many behaviors are not commanded, commended, or forbidden in Scripture. They are neither black nor white, but gray. Such issues in one age or area may not be the same as those in other times or places, but every age and every place has had to deal with the gray area of Christian living. Knowledge is only partial. No matter what he knows, it's incomplete! <sup>1</sup>The minute a person gets to the stage that he thinks he knows everything, he has stopped learning and probably does not know near as much as he thought he did.

**8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.** Love unites a person to God. If a man loves God, he is known and accepted by God. Believers have a relationship with God, and Love is the key! Loving and being loved by God is everything!

### 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 Consider The Weak

**8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.** Paul now returns to the critical problem of the Corinthians: eating those things (*the meat*) offered in the sacrifice to idols. He agrees with those Corinthians who were taught well and knew that an idol was nothing. The stone, precious metal, or wood is real, but there is no god behind it. The image is not anything that really exists. It only reflects the imagination of the one who designed it, or the impersonation of the demon who deceives through it. Idols are not gods. There is no God but One.

- He is God Almighty; I AM; Jehovah, known by many names but One God who is the Supreme Majestic Being of the universe!
- He is the One of whom are all things. He is the Source of all creation!
- He is our life!—the One who stands supreme between God and man and is God!
- He is the One true God; He is a Spirit!

**8:5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)—** In Egypt there had been thousands of false gods. Here in Corinth, there had been many false gods, as well. The problem with people who worship false gods is that they want a god that they can see with their eyes. They worship things from God's creation instead of worshipping the Creator.

**8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.** Paul reiterates that as far as being a Christian believer, there is just one God! Pagans believed that there were many gods. All things owe their existence to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

### 1 Corinthians 8:7-13 Don't Be A Stumbling Block

**8:7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.** Paul asks how come every man does not have this knowledge? Well, some of the Corinthian believers were immature. They had immature knowledge and were likely to fall back into sin and defile their consciences. Some took it as what it was with its false beliefs by eating the meat offered to idols. If they participated in the questionable pleasures and social functions, they would defile their consciences. They were not spiritually strong enough to control their minds and beliefs—not yet—not totally.

**8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.** The fact is

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/1corinthians/12.html>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-Sundayschool.html>

that food is immaterial to God. It does not make us spiritual or unspiritual. The meat is not what makes the sin. It is their attitude toward the meat. Eating or abstaining does not make us acceptable to God; neither one makes us better (*meaning to excel; to have an advantage*) or worse (*meaning to come short or behind*). <sup>2</sup>Anything that we cannot do with a clear conscience is sin if we do it. If we are a Christian, God has placed His laws in our heart. Our conscience alerts us when something is a sin or not.

**8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.** A believer's liberty can cause a weak believer to fall into sin, that's why Paul gives this strong exhortation: "*take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block.*" A stumbling block means a stone, an obstacle, an occasion, an offense—something that causes a person to fall. Therefore, in the case of the Corinthians, some believers were participating in the social functions where meat had been offered to idols and attending functions in the idol's temple. This caused some of the weaker believers to do the same, but they were not able to handle the situation.

**8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;**— As they recline at the table in the idol's temple and the weak man sees the mature or knowledgeable man sitting and eating meat that's been offered to idols shall not the conscience of the weak man be encouraged and reassured to do the same?

**8:11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?**— Since the mature believer is usually looked upon as having knowledge; knowing what is right and wrong, he should not cause the weak brother to perish. The one supreme reason is that Christ died for him. Christ paid the ultimate price and sacrificed everything to save the brother. How much more should we? Will that really fortify or harden his weak conscience that he too will eat food offered to idols.

**8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.** To would a brother's conscience is to sin against Christ Himself.

1. There is no greater sin than to damage a person's conscience and spirit. Why? Because...
  - a. a wounded conscience or spirit makes a person feel useless and helpless. It destroys all drive and initiative, will, and ambition.
  - b. a wounded spirit causes a person to give up, lie around, do nothing, and walk about defeated. A conscience or spirit that has been wounded deeply enough will destroy a person. Remember: Christ loves the weak person so much that He died for him. He gave His life for that person. Therefore, anyone who sins against a weak brother by leading him astray sins against Christ.
2. Jesus Christ is identified with believers. He lives within the believer, even the weak believer. Therefore, to harm a believer is to harm Christ!

**8:13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.** Paul makes this clear declaration that if meat (food) causes his brother (*those younger and more immature in the faith*) to stumble or be offended, or be destroyed, he will not eat that food. <sup>3</sup>Paul was willing to limit his own freedom. He would never make it difficult for another Christian. His action might be good in itself. But it would be wrong if it caused another believer to sin.

#### SUMMARY:

<sup>4</sup>The issue of whether to eat meat that has been associated with idol worship occupies three chapters of this letter. The problem is that most if not all meat available in the Corinthian marketplace and at public social gatherings would have fallen into this category. Should Christians buy such meat? Should they eat it if it is served at someone else's home? Should they participate in meals associated with pagan religious festivals?

Some in the community see nothing wrong with eating this meat because "*no idol in the world really exists*" (1 Corinthians 8:4). Paul agrees with this assessment of idols. Yet he argues that love is more important than knowledge, just as love is more important than the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues or prophesying (see 1 Corinthians 13). Paul answers the questions about idol meat not with a new teaching on idolatry but by urging the Corinthians to consider how their actions will affect others and to refrain from any action that will cause others to stumble.

#### APPLICATION:

Considering others is forgetting about yourself. Allow God to fill you with His love so He can build the right attitude in us and we won't be puffed up.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lovethelord.com/books/1corinthians/12.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/1-corinthians-lbw.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.enterthebible.org/resourcelink.aspx?rid=852>