

“Clear Principles and Unclear Details”

1Corinthians 8

June 2, 2019

INTRO ... “Clear Principles & Unclear Details”

1Corinthians 8

v. 1-3 ...

- **The Next Topic...**

Paul now addresses the second issue raised by the Corinthians in their letter to him (see 7:1). Most meat sold in the town marketplace came from sacrificial animals that had been slaughtered at pagan temple ceremonies. Did these rituals somehow automatically taint the food? Could Christians buy it? Could they eat it if it was offered to them at friends’ homes? What about the various social events—weddings, parties, clubs, and so on—which often used the temple dining halls for their festivities? Could Christians participate and eat meat at these events? What about more overtly religious rites in those temples? The issue clearly was not as simple or innocuous as it might at first glance seem to Westerners today.” **Craig Blomberg**, “1st Corinthians”, NIV App Comm.

...Several temples in Corinth had dining rooms where feasts were held on many occasions, including birthdays. Temples were the restaurants of antiquity. ...Some, if not most, of the meat available in the market had a history of being a temple sacrifice. ...In summary (as Fee, Willis, and Gardner maintain) the issue is not eating meat, but eating meat in an idol temple.” **Ben Witherington**, “Conflict and Community in Corinth”, p. 186-189

- **The TENSION... KNOWLEDGE <<< — >>> LOVE**
 - ***We Will Encounter This Tension Elsewhere (1Cor 13)***
 - **WARNING: This is NOT Paul Declaring War on Knowledge!**

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Isaiah 5:13 Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

Eph 1:15-17 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,

- A Secret Key to “Kingdom Knowledge”—v. 2-3
 - ***Your Knowledge (your reasons and data from which you do life)—Cannot function correctly without a proper connection to God ...Loving God and being Known by God!!***
 - ***This Kingdom Knowledge is “Informed & Counseled by LOVE”—It “Knows Some Important & Relevant Facts—but the Use of That Knowledge is Adjusted/Tempered/Paced/Paused by LOVE!***
 - ...“Kingdom Knowledge has a Warmth and Human Understanding and Compassion to it! ...It is seldom some cold set of principles where Only the Facts are Important!!
 - ***Without This Ingredient—“Knowledge Puffs Up” ...and Puffed Up People are Problematic People!***
 - ...In the CHURCH! ...In a FAMILY ...Anywhere
 - WARNING: This can be hard to Detect & Discern ...because Mere Knowledge is Like a MATH EQUATION—It is Simply Concerned with being RIGHT or WRONG!! ...But human life is also like a History Class—where the real human story is involved!

Technically—They’re Right!

...The ‘Knowledge People’ Win the Debate!!

v. 4-6, 8 ...The Doctors of Doctrine and the Theology Specialists Win These Arguments—They Are Technically Right in these Points!! ...***Those Idols Aren't Real!!*** ...***Our Standing with God is NOT Changed by This Practice!!***

...**10:23-24** ...***the "All Things are Lawful" angle of Knowledge—Is Technically True***

...***BUT***—***"not all things are helpful" ... "not all things build up" ...***
"Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor"
—These are Not "Knowledge Insights"—these are "LOVE Insights!!"

v. 7 ...The problem in this area **for some**

- In ***the mixed community of Corinth*** ...there is a segment here mentioned who are "WEAK"

"Not everyone possesses this knowledge" ... This is a reality to be aware of—the Body of Christ is made up of people with diverse backgrounds and understandings and traditions and cultural formations—This is Increasingly True at LCC!

The Need Being Addressed by Paul

"The actions of some in the church, who are acting within their rights and are guided by Biblical Truths, are creating a situation of stumbling for some others in the church."

NOTE: The actions within themselves are Not Sinful [that would generate a different conversation]

NOTE: The Stumbling is Very Subjective ...it may not be true of everyone ...it may not be true in every church.

NOTE: If you are NOT a Meaningful Member of the Church—you don't care about this!!
 ...Remember, where we started with Paul's Agenda in This Letter:

"If we are to characterize 1Corinthians as either a problem-oriented letter or a progress-oriented letter, then it must surely be placed in the former category. Paul is still having to sort out a multitude of basics for the Corinthian Church... Paul is in the midst of trying to create community and dissipate conflict in the Corinthian Christian community." Ben Witherington, "Conflict and Community in Corinth", p.73

...The N.T. Epistles aren't "Doctrinal Data" offered in an On-line Seminary Class!
...This is Teaching That is Needed in order to Build the N.T. Community—So that God's Glory May be Seen There!!

Eph 3:7-10 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

...If THIS is Not Your or My Priority ...then WHY would I want My Rights and My Knowledge to be SLOWED UP or INCONVENIENCED by Others???

...Over the years I have talked to many people who were dissatisfied with their local church but didn't know exactly why. In many of these cases, I believe the missing element was the kind of love envisioned in the New Testament. Failure to love is all too common and it creates a broad spectrum of problems, as evidenced by the strife-ridden church at Corinth. ...Love is vital to the local church because love is 'the life-breath of the church,' essential to its evangelistic witness and spiritual growth (Eph 4:16)." Alexander Strauch, "Leading with Love", p. 2

v. 9-13

- **"Take Care"** ...that's the phrase that needs to guide our actions. *"Take up caring for others" when you formulate your plan of actions.* ...This is the CLEAR Part!!
...Your actions, choices, boundaries, guidelines, priorities, practices, and permissions are NOT merely the product of your rights and your accurate knowledge. ...You are called to CARE about Others!!

- **"a Stumbling Block to the Weak"**

"Weak" = those who lack some strength, understanding, or benefit that you possess

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel

Husbands possess certain strengths, abilities, pace, fortitude, capacity, etc.—that your wife Might Not Possess ...LOVE calls on you to Acknowledge that and ADJUST YOURSELF Accordingly!!—NOT Because You're WRONG & She's RIGHT ...That's a KNOWLEDGE ARGUMENT!!

...Paul makes the same argument to the Corinthians!! ...Why Aren't You Willing to Dial Back Your Life for the Good of Others who are DIFFERENT Than You!!

"Take Care and Love"—That's the Clear Principle!

...The Rewarding, Fulfilling, Satisfying, Meaningful Life that the Christian is Called to is a Life of Serving and Sacrificial Love that is Intentional and Mindful of Others!

Php 2:1-8 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.



These are
LOVE
Expressions

The Details Aren't So Clear

Gal 5:1-6 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. ² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Acts 16:3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

1 Cor 9:19-23 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

...The Same Paul who's knowledge informed him that "Circumcision is nothing"—it's NOT the basis for commending us to God!!! ...Is guided by LOVE to have Timothy Circumcised!!!!

"There are Clear Principles and Unclear Details—Sometimes"

v. 11-13 ...Underapplying & Overapplying This Admonition

- Did Paul teach that no one should eat meat if there is the possibility that someone may stumble over that? ...Did Paul teach that no one should do ANYTHING that has the potential for another person to possibly stumble over?

...Paul says in one place—*"I'll never eat meat, then!"* And comes back 2 chapters later and says—*"eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the*

ground of conscience.” (1Cor 10:27) ...So is Paul declaring a prohibition on eating meat or not? Was his personal practice to become a non-meat eater for the rest of his life? Did Paul only apply that in limited settings? Did Paul eat meat from the marketplace, when no one was looking? Did this make Paul a hypocrite? What if people found out he was doing this, wouldn't this damage his testimony?

...All these are DETAILS that are Not So Clear!Stop Ignoring the Forest for the Trees!!—Stop minimizing the Principle by Debating the Details!!!

- **Clear Principles but Not So Clear Details on Application**
 - What's clear: *Knowledge and Personal Freedoms are to be Effectively Informed by Love and Serving of Others*
 - What's not Clear: *How does this Principle Show Up in My Daily Spaces of Life and in How I Take on the Burdens of Others*
- **Overapplying This Passage Has Its Own Concerning Set of Realities for the Church**
 - **We are each prone to certain Taboos and Weighty Concerns based on some very subjective elements** (our bad experiences, our personalities/temperaments, our traditions)

Some Christians nevertheless insist on a kind of legalism that forbids morally neutral practices on the grounds that one never knows when someone else might be hurt. First Corinthians 10:25-30 addresses these concerns more directly, but here it is worth pointing out that such legalism itself often has damaging consequences. Jerry Vines, for example, encourages teetotaling, even in the privacy of one's home, on the grounds that children may be taught that drinking in moderation is acceptable when in fact they might turn out to be among the small minority of persons who have alcoholic propensities. What Vines fails to consider, however, is the far more common pattern of children from legalistic homes and churches who rebel in behavior and belief against their upbringing precisely because of such rigidity. In general, educating children and adults to responsible behavior and moderation in morally neutral matters proves much more successful than absolute prohibitions or indulgent permissiveness in producing mature Christians.” Craig Blomberg, “First Corinthians”, NIV App Comm

...Swinging the pendulum too far to the right is seldom a solution to swinging it too far to the left!!

Paul refuses to absolutize this perspective and try to foist it on all Christians, and so must we. Sadly, the church today seems to be increasingly polarized on the issue of permissiveness versus legalism. Clearly immoral behavior is tolerated on the one hand, and clearly amoral behavior is prohibited on the other. We need to educate people and to provide models of responsible choice on a case-by-case basis. Our teaching and our example should be grounded in the Christian ethic of love and should put others' well-being before our own, yet without allowing good to be called evil (Rom. 14:16)." **Craig Blomberg**, "First Corinthians", NIV App Comm