

## 1 Corinthians 8

*8:1* “Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that *“We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.* <sup>2</sup> *Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know.* <sup>3</sup> *But whoever loves God is known by God.”*

In this chapter, Paul moves on to food sacrificed to idols. In verse 1, Paul says that *“we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies (or builds up).”* This seems kind of strange that in order to talk about food sacrificed to idols, Paul starts with knowledge and love. During this study, we have said a number of times that the Greeks or Corinthians were raised to think that knowledge is very important but to a Christian, love is more important. By the time we get to chapter 13, Paul will give them a deeper understanding of love.

“Some translations say *“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”* Guzik says, “The difference between puffs up and edifies is striking; it is the difference between a *bubble* and a *building*. Some Christians grow, others just swell!”

God had a lot to say about idols in Jeremiah 10:1-22. Fill in these blanks regarding idols in Jeremiah 10:

V. 5 – *“Idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good.”*

V. 8 – Those that worship idols are *“all senseless and foolish; they are taught by worthless wooden idols.”*

V. 11 – *“These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”*

V 14-15 – *“Everyone is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. The images he makes are a fraud; they have no breath in them. 15 They are worthless, the objects of mockery; when their judgment comes, they will perish.”*

What does Jeremiah say about God in verse 10 of Jeremiah 10? *“But the Lord is the only true God. He is the living God and the everlasting King!”* 1 John 4:4 says, *“Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”* In verse 2, Paul says that some people think they know it all but do they really know anything. What is truly important, he says in verse 3, is that we love God.

What do these verses say about what God sees or knows about us?

Matthew 6:4 – *“your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

1 Samuel 16:7 – *“God does not see as man sees, since man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

Hebrews 4:13 – *“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”*

*“4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”*

In verse 4, Paul says that based on what we learned in Jeremiah 10, idols worshiped by others are nothing more than a piece of wood. We worship the one true God. In verse 5, Paul refers to the idols as “so-called gods”. Remember that Jeremiah 10:8 says that the people that worship idols *“are taught by worthless wooden idols.”* In verse 6, Paul restates what I am sure he taught them when he was in Corinth. Even though Paul says there is one God, the Father and one Lord, Jesus the Christ, he is not trying to separate God and Jesus.

Paul changes a couple of words. For God, he says *“from whom all things came and for whom we live”*. God is the creator, nowhere in the Bible does it say anything different and we should love God and devote our lives to Him, our reason for living. For Jesus, he says *“one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”* Jesus is our savior. Paul is echoing John 1:3-4. John 1:4 says, *“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.”* As Lord, Jesus requires obedience. We can truly live because He set us free from death and sin.

*“In many rituals only part of the meat was burned. The priest and the family making the sacrifice took the rest. This consecrated meat was taken home and eaten, or sold in the marketplace. The Jerusalem council had forbidden Christians to eat these foods (Acts 15:29).”* Holman New Testament Commentary

*“The Corinthian Christians may have reasoned like this: if idols are really nothing, it must mean nothing to eat meat sacrificed to nothing idols, and it must mean nothing to eat in the buildings used to worship these nothing idols. In the following section, Paul will show them a better way.”* (Guzik)

*“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. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.”*

Paul agrees with the “so what” attitude of the Corinthian Christians but in verses 7 and 8. However, Paul adds a “BUT”. Paul’s experience in dealing with people was that not everyone

has the same information and so they may not come to the same conclusion as you. What Paul is saying is that if you know that idols are nothing and God is everything, then it is ok to eat unless there are believers present that still believe that these idols have power, then do not eat of it. If they see you eat the food, they will think that you recognize the power of the idols.

“Paul asks the Corinthian Christians who know there is nothing to an idol to remember that not everyone knows this. And if someone believes there is something to an idol, and they eat meat that has been sacrificed to an idol, their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Why is their conscience considered weak? Not because their conscience doesn’t work. Indeed, it does work – in fact, it overworks. Their conscience is considered weak because it is wrongly informed; their conscience is operating on the idea that there really is something to an idol. You can imagine the “free” Corinthian Christians with their superior knowledge saying, “but we’re *right!*” And in this case, being right is important but it is not more important than showing love to the family of God.” (Guzik)

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

In verse 9, Paul says that just because you are right, don’t become a stumbling block to other Christians. In his letter to the Romans, Paul goes into more detail about not causing others to stumble. Read Romans 14:13-21. In an ideal world, everyone would have all the same information and come to the same conclusions. Everyone would grow at the same pace in the knowledge of Jesus and have the same understanding of God’s Word.

When Pastor Mickey McManus decided to leave our church and move to Tiffin, OH, those who regularly attended the church knew that he left on his own. Those that attended occasionally evidently did not have the same information and believed that we, as a church, ran him off. Paul says that it was better to not do something that might lead other believers astray. In verse 13, he says that he would stop eating meat, if it was a stumbling block for someone else. Quite often today, Christians drinking alcohol fits into this category. Some believe that drinking any alcohol is wrong and others believe it is ok. It can become a stumbling block.

“The apostle called for Christians to care about one another so much that they put the good of others over their own rights. Theological precision must be so extensive that it factors the personal and relational dimensions of church life in addition to theological facts.”

Holman New Testament Commentary