

## The Blessing Of Limited Freedom – 1Corinthians 8

Bible Study ~ 2/1/17

Grace Church of Lockeford

What Paul writes in this chapter is in response to a question given to him by the church in Corinth. Corinth had several temples and the practice was to bring food for the “gods” to them. This food was later sold by the priests at a “discount market”. Some were buying this food and others were being offended. Paul addresses two factors in dealing with this question. **First, he presents...**

### 1. The Truth Behind Our Freedom vv. 1-8

Paul immediately moves the discussion out of the realm of human opinion and into the realm of God and His glory. If we argue opinions, we will never get anywhere. However, when the focus becomes Christlikeness and the glory of God, we become willing to bend. In regards to things offered to idols Paul says, we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, makes us arrogant and proud. But love? Love edifies. Knowledge puffs up and love builds up. V. 2, if you think you know something, you know nothing the way you should. But if you love God, you are known by Him. With these thoughts, Paul sets the stage for his answer. Essentially he is saying, “It doesn’t matter what you think. It doesn’t matter what you ‘know’. What matters is loving God and putting others first.” **After laying this groundwork, Paul gets into...**

#### What we know about God vv. 4-6

An idol is nothing (v. 4). There is no God but one. I love the simplicity and yet profoundness of this statement. Idols are nothing! They cannot move, talk, or help in any way. There is only one God! Though there are many things that are called gods (v. 5), they are nothing. For us, for believers, there is one God (v. 6), the Father who is the source of all things and for whose purposes and glory we exist! And there is one Lord Jesus Christ (also God) who made all things and through whom we live! We live and move and have our being in Christ! Paul’s point here is simple. Idols don’t matter. They are nothing. God is everything. He made us for His glory and redeemed us for His purposes. That is all that really matters. But... There is a qualification. Though idols do not matter in and of themselves, they can matter when it comes to conscience. **So Paul next goes into...**

#### What we know about food vv. 7-8

v. 7. The knowledge that idols are nothing and that God is everything is difficult to someone who was enslaved to idol worship in the past. This person, because of their past, is unable to eat the food and think of it as simply cheap food! To them it is always something offered to an idol and it leads to a defilement of conscience for them to eat this food. V. 8. We know that food is food. It doesn’t make us more or less closer to God by what we eat. This is a really important verse for things like Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Muslims, Jews, etc. All of those groups teach that you are more or less godly depending on what you eat. Paul says that food doesn’t commend us to God. This word “commend” is the Greek word *παρίστημι* *paristēmi* *be present; present; stand by. To cause to be present – to cause to be in a specified place or in near proximity to something else; often in order to be at someone’s disposal.* Our righteous standing before God has nothing to do with what we eat or don’t eat! It has everything to do with Christ! While overindulgence of certain foods or beverages can be sinful, the use of them is not.

This is the truth about our freedom. We love God and are known by Him. He is the only God and idols are nothing. We can eat whatever food we want because it is our relationship with Christ that matters, not the foods we eat. But that doesn’t mean we **should** eat whatever we want. **The second thing Paul addresses is...**

### 2. The Love That Motivates Limitation vv. 9-13

v. 9. But... This is a word we would do well to pay attention to. Almost without exception, when we find this word, we find an important contrast, clarification, or explanation. Beware. Literally this word

means, “See”. The idea is *to be careful, watchful, to pay attention*. Paul already mentioned that those who are weak may eat the meat and feel defiled. Paul warns the believers that their liberty could be a stumbling block to others. Stumbling block is a polite way of saying sin. It is possible for the careless exercise of freedom to lead a brother or sister into sin. How could that be? Paul explains in *v. 10*. Someone could see you eating and be lead to do it to even though they don’t believe they have the freedom to. While that is wrong on their part, Paul is not dealing with them right here. He is dealing with the strong one. We have a responsibility to guard the hearts of our brothers and sisters in Christ! *V. 11* states that our knowledge and freedom if not exercised with deference could lead to the destruction of our siblings in Christ! This is a big deal! We are reminded that they too are ones for whom Christ died. That is how precious they are to God and how precious they ought to be to us! We are blood bought siblings! We should care for and love one another enough to limit our freedom.

If we don’t limit our freedom around those we know to be weaker in the faith, *v. 12* says we are sinning against them. This is a very serious charge that Paul puts forward here. The wounding of a weaker brothers conscience is sin! It is not just a sin against the brother or sister who defiles their conscience to join your liberty. It is a sin against Christ Himself! Because of the serious nature of this offense, Paul is determined to never cause his brother to stumble in *v. 13*. If the food I indulge in could potentially make my brother stumble. I will never eat meat again. That is how serious we are to take this. That is the love we are to have for one another. Paul masterfully puts it into perspective here. Do you really want to enjoy a cheap steak if it could destroy the walk of another believer? Is the satisfaction of my appetite really more important than a person’s life? How much better to voluntarily limit our freedom that our brothers and sisters may grow and be edified!

What a blessing and joy it is to limit our freedom that our siblings in Christ might grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

CHALLENGE: Be willing to sacrifice pleasures that others may grow unhindered.