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HOLINESS IN FREEDOM: THE WEAK

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 8:1-13
- 02 Romans 14:5-22
- 03 1 John 4:20-21
- 04 Psalm 115:1-8
- 05 Colossians 1:15-20
- 06 Titus 1:10-16
- 07 Galatians 5:13-26

WEEK 12

Holiness in Freedom: The Weak

Paul now turns his attention to an issue of concern for first century believers. It was common in ancient temples to offer sacrifices of meat to the gods. Israel did this with their own offerings. The people would come to the temple, make their offering and then feast on the meal together. It should have been evident that a follower of Christ should not visit a pagan temple and partake in an offering to a false god.

However, meat in the marketplace often came from these pagan offerings. It was difficult to be certain that what was bought in a marketplace or offered in a non-believing home had not originally been part of a pagan offering. Many faithful Jews would have had their own marketplace, refusing to eat in a Gentile home to avoid potential compromise. Should members of the church take the same approach? The marketplace and the dinner table were primary sources of social interaction. Was a total separation with the surrounding culture required for a clear conscience?

As is often the case in 1 Corinthians, Paul elevates the discussion to higher principles. First, the pantheon of gods is not real. They have no power to contaminate food. Christians should not actively participate in false worship or fear their food is tainted. However, another principle is at work: love for one's neighbor. If another brother or sister is bothered by the potential of spiritual corruption, indulging one's freedom at the expense of the neighbor's conscience fails at Christian love. This principle of concern for others becomes a grounding Christian ethic for decisions where the answer is less clear.

CONCERNING FOOD SACRIFICED TO IDOLS

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

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.

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.

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.

Discussion Guide

WARM UP

If you find yourself in a dispute, which of the following best describes you?

- a. Do your best to convince others you are right.
- b. Work to find a compromise.
- c. You give in because you hate confrontation.
- d. Kindly, agree to disagree.

Have you ever been involved in what seemed, at the time, to be a huge disagreement, only to later realize the issue wasn't that big of a deal?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

The issue in this passage concerns eating food previously sacrificed to idols. In verses 1-3, is Paul more concerned about the acquisition of knowledge or expressing love to others? How can this principle be readily applied in our lives?

In verses 4-8, what is Paul's decision on whether one should eat food sacrificed to idols? How does Paul exercise good leadership in this situation?

What is Paul's warning to those who have a deeper understanding of this issue? What are some stumbling blocks, areas of divisiveness, that Christians encounter today?

1 Corinthians 8-11:1 addresses Christian liberty in various circumstances. What is Paul's final statement on the exercising of liberty in verse 13? Regarding issues where you have been on the "weak" side, how did you feel toward those who ignored your concerns (values, money, clothing, alcohol, music, lifestyle, etc.)?

APPLICATION

Consider areas where you may be strong, or other areas where you may be weak. Are there steps you need to take to make course corrections?

Is it absolutely necessary to "win" every argument, regardless of the cost?

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns to share with your group.

Where do you have differences of opinion with others where a measure of restraint is needed? Ask your group to pray for you regarding those areas.

“Of what use is it to discourse learnedly on the Trinity,
if you lack humility and therefore, displease the Trinity?...
I would far rather feel contrition than be able to define it.”

THOMAS À KEMPIS, THE IMITATION OF CHRIST



