

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

“Being Wrong In The Right”

Proper perspective; that’s been the primary thrust of what we’ve been receiving in our last couple of studies whereby the Corinthian Church had evidently wrote Paul a letter asking for the appropriate understanding on a # of issues that had arisen there in the body. **There was some confusion regarding marriage, what’s an appropriate relationship between a man and his wife? There was a concern regarding singleness, if I’m not married should I even *get* married, is it ok to want to *be* married? and Now as we approach Ch 8 Paul begins to develop the proper perspective regarding the appropriate *attitude* in the midst of questionable practices.**

For them, specifically the issue at hand was that of eating meat offered to idols. Was that ok, did it somehow associate them with the idol worship, or condone the happenings that surrounded the sacrifice? I mean, “How are we to handle this?” Remember Corinth was riddled with various pagan temples, it was littered with multiple places of worship, be it to Poseidon, Hermes, Aphrodite, Apollo, Diana, Athena, or Artemis, temples were everywhere. **and Along with temples come the temple sacrifices, of which a portion would be burned on the altar, a portion would be given to the worshiper, and a portion would belong to the priest. Well, if the priest had more meat than he knew what to do with having done say 6-8 sacrifices in the course of a day, what did he do with all the meat he had left over?** He sold it, and here’s the deal, it was often the choicest cuts of meat (because it was meat they were offering to their gods) and it was cheaper than you could score it in the meat markets. So it was a great deal, the question is, was this an acceptable practice? “Is it ok for me to purchase meat from the pagan temples, or enjoy a meal there in their outdoor patio grill with a friend?”

Now for us we don’t (in our culture) wrestle so much with that particular problem. I’m not confronted with the temptation of “McDiana’s” or “Hellfire Hermes, best BBQ in town.” But we could easily bring this right up to where we live by simply considering a few of the questionable practices that we wrestle with in our own day and age. and I’ve come to realize that the list of questionable practices is virtually inexhaustible, it just depends on where you’re at and what circle you’re in. But as for questionable practices in the Christian community today we could consider dress code. What’s the appropriate way for a Christian to dress, and does that dress code need to be altered Sunday morning. Casual wear throughout the week, suit and tie on Sunday. We could consider hairstyle, various piercings, is going to the theatre appropriate? What about tattoos? For some, shorts and make-up is from the pit of hell, for others they won’t eat pork, but they won’t think twice about having a beer with you. **Some see smoking as a mortal sin, others question dancing, what about the style of music you prefer, and on and on the list could go. Some see sports as a problem because they believe it promotes an ego-exalting attitude. What about TV; or for that matter education; public school, private school, or home school? What translation of the bible do *you* read? You see where does it end and who decides where it ends? How much do I let someone else’s opinion control my actions, where does it end? Some won’t drink coffee, but they have no problem with tea or soda... so you get the idea.**

There are some areas that the bible speaks directly to, there are no questions about it, it's black and white. Drunkenness, it's a blatant biblical sin, fornication, homosexuality, adultery, stealing, lying, drug abuse, covetousness, murder. These are things the bible speaks specifically towards; we're not to partake in such things.

There are other things that the bible says we are to do. We're to be kind to one another, forgiving one another, we're to be merciful, upright, a people of integrity, we're to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and strength. and There are *essentials* to the faith, Jesus Christ born of a virgin, fully God, fully man, in all ways tempted as we are tempted yet with out sin, His atoning death, burial and resurrection, the Trinity, (Tri-unity of God) that we're saved by grace through faith alone. These are essentials, areas of which as believers we can not compromise.

But what we're considering today aren't the absolutes, or the essentials. But rather those gray areas to which the scriptures don't speak. Is it ok to color Easter eggs, or decorate Christmas trees, or take your child trick or treating? Well, can I be honest with you, the bible doesn't address those issues directly. **But what it does do is lay out some principles for us generally that apply in these types of situations. Where the bible speaks directly, we directly obey, but where the bible is silent, we have some general guidelines to help us reason such things through.** Notice.

Vs1-3

So right off the bat Paul begins to drill the issue, and I love the fact that the Holy Spirit has us to focus 1st, not on the idea of Christian liberty, but rather Christian love. Because it's not always a simple matter of having enough light shed on a situation, but rather what's essential is that we be an instrument of love in the given circumstance. **So Paul let's us in on the question that he'll be addressing, "Now concerning things offered to idols:" but then he speaks parenthetically (giving us a little side note) up through Vs 3 so that we're able to understand that the ruling principle at hand isn't one of liberty, it's one of love. It's not simply having the proper light (understanding) in the given situation, but it's about being willing to shed God's love in the given situation.**

So our *learning* is always to be placed with in the context of *love*. Remember Eph 4? "... speaking the truth in love," Eph 4:15 and Therein lies the balance. Notice he says there in Vs 1, "We all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." What does that mean? It means that the primary principle that governs Christian behavior is not based upon learning, but it's based upon love. **and Though the bible is very clear that we're to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. Please don't let me by any means undermine the absolute importance of studying and learning the Word of God. But the goal of the Christian life isn't centered on knowledge, it's centered on love. Why is that?**

Because knowledge that's not balanced by love can be lethal to the Christian life. Both knowledge and love have an effect on the believer, they both cause growth, but there's a grave difference between the growth that's based solely on knowledge and the growth that results from a foundation of love. Notice he says, "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies."

There's kind of a play on words there, more literally we could understand that to say that, "Knowledge puffs up, but love *builds up*." One carries the idea of growing as in swelling like a balloon, or a bubble filled with air, the other speaks of growing as being built up board by board, brick by brick. One has no lasting substance, the other has an ongoing ability to endure, one is worthwhile, the other is *worthless*. Knowledge puffs up, what's that speak of? Pride, and as you well know God hates pride. We read in Isaiah, "*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!*" Isa 5:21 Woe to the "know it all." Paul told the Romans, "*Do not be wise in your own opinion.*" Rom 12:16 But this is the effect of knowledge upon our lives, you know, we get a little insight on something and suddenly we think we're all that, we become proud and arrogant.

But the fact is that even in the field of our own personal forte, how much of everything in that field that there is to know do we really know? Maybe your specialty is science, how much do you really think you know regarding the combined total of knowledge that's available in the field of science? Or perhaps your gig is mathematics, or history, computer programming, mine is the bible. Yet how much of all that there is to be known about the bible do I really think I know? Let me tell you, very little, I know enough to know I don't know much, and the more I know the more I realize I don't know. But when we're just an intake of knowledge, we begin to get puffed up, that's why it's so critical that we be equally if not more so pursuing and balancing knowledge in love.

Because it's the difference between a bubble, and a building. Some Christians grow, and others just swell, some are built up, others are puffed up. and We want to be instruments of building up, encouraging and facilitating growth in our brothers and sisters lives.

Vs2

You see, all a "know it all," shows that he knows by his "know it all" attitude is that he really doesn't *know* anything. The proverbs tell us, "*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*" Prov 26:12 Don't buy the lie, we're not the overflowing fountain of wisdom and knowledge that we'd so often like to think that we are. and Again it's not saying that we shouldn't be seeking to learn, but be realistic, the bible says that we're not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. and It's not that all knowledge is irrelevant or useless, there is a knowledge that is incredibly important, that is radically relevant to each of us, and it's the knowledge (notice) that God has of us.

Vs3

You see, knowing *about* God is one thing, but being known by God is something altogether different. and We're not talking about being known by God in the general sense of the word in that God "knows" all, we're not speaking generally here, but intimately, personally. and You guys this is what it's all about, this is what's so critical, that you love God, and that God knows you. and Going to church and being apart of religious activities is not how we love God, or how God gets to know us. Remember there in Matt Ch 7 where Jesus was saying that not everyone who says to Him, "Lord, Lord," is going to enter the kingdom of Heaven. He said, "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*" Matt 7:22-23

So religious routines won't help me at all on the day that I stand before the Lord. It's imperative that He know me, personally. How does that happen? Through *faith* in Jesus Christ. As we mentioned earlier we're saved by grace, through faith alone, when I open my heart, and surrender myself to Jesus, when I invite the Lord into my heart, into my life, I enter into a relationship of intimacy with God. It's more than knowing *about* Him, it's knowing *Him*, and Him knowing me. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own." John 10:14 The Lord knows those who are His.

Vs4-6

Now there are obviously a # of things in here that we want to touch on. #1 Checkout that phrase in Vs 4, "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one." "We know that an idol is nothing in the world." What does that mean? It means exactly what it says. Though there may be a statue of Zeus, or Hermes, or whoever there on a particular pedestal, and it's carved pristinely out of marble, or overlaid with gold, there's no deity behind it, even if it were inspired demonically, as opposed to the pure figment of man's imagination, there's nothing of godly substance to it whatsoever. The Psalmist said,

"Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them." Ps 115:4-8 Translation: They're nothing, (danger in worshipping anything other than the 1 true living God, because we become like our God) there is no other God but one. Again the bible says, "Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other." Deut 4:39 In Duet Ch 32 we read, "Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand." Deut 32:39 The Lord says in Isa 44:6, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.'" Over and over again the bible makes this declaration, there is no God but one, Isa 44:24 "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: 'I am the LORD, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone,"

Now Paul isn't saying that people don't worship other things, various idols or whatever and ascribe to them the title of "lord" or "god." He says in Vs 5 that there are all kinds of things that people worship as their god, in India alone there are over a million "gods" that are worshiped, yet in reality they're not a God at all, there's no deity to them whatsoever. Oh there may be some spirituality to some of them relating to the demonic, but don't be deceived there's only 1 God, "The Father (Vs 6) of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we live."

Now don't be confused here as to think that Paul is *distinguishing* Jesus as different than God, to the contrary Paul placing Jesus on that plane of equality *with* God. and Of course this is the mystery of the Trinity, the bible is very clear about the 3 distinct personalities of the Godhead as represented by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (probably one of the most prominent pictures of seeing all 3 is at the baptism of Jesus, Matt 3:16-17).

Yet the bible is emphatic that there's only 1 God, now how does that work? Hey, let me know if you figure it out, all I know is that the bible says it and so by faith I receive it. I can't reason and understand, or think like God thinks, it's beyond me. (The other day my daughter was sitting beside me playing with Penny our dog, and she began to talk to the dog, ask her if she missed "Molly." Molly was one of Penny's off spring who has since died a while back. and Elizabeth asked me if Penny missed Molly, and I told her, "No, I don't think that Penny misses Molly." and She said, "Why not?" and I said, "Well, because Penny is a dog and dogs just don't think like we think." and No sooner than those words came out of my mouth it was like a new wave of light was shed on that truth to me, I'm not saying we're like dogs, though when compared to God I'd say that's being too kind to us. But it was like the Lord reminded me that even as my dog just couldn't think like I think, no matter how hard she may try or want to it was just beyond her ability, even so I just couldn't think like God thinks, no matter how hard I try or wanted to, its just beyond my ability. As a dog is to humanity, mankind isn't even that far along compared to where God's at.) So trying to wrap my brain around the Trinity is an exercise in futility, it's not going to happen on this side of eternity. All I know is that the Father is God, that Jesus is God, that the Holy Spirit is God, and that there's only 1 God.

God is the creator of all things, and Jesus is the agent through whom all things were created. You're familiar with John Ch 1, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*" John 1:1-3 "There is one God, the Father, *of whom* are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, *through whom* are all things, and through whom we live." Jesus said it real plain, "I and My Father are...one."

There's only one God, and this seems to be what their question to Paul revolved around. There were those saying, "Paul we know that there's only one God, you've taught us that yourself, so what's the big deal if I eat meat sacrificed to an idol?" and In essence Paul is going to say, "I agree with you in your understanding, you're walking in the correct light, there's only one God, so in reality it's nothing to eat a rack of lamb from a lamb sacrificed to an idol. But the Christian life goes beyond simply walking in the light, it also consists of walking in love, with consideration for others who may not be quite where you're at in their understanding of Christian liberty."

Vs7

Do you understand what Paul is getting at here? He is in essence saying, "You may be in the right as far as your knowledge is concerned, but there's more to life than simply being right. Because it's wrong of you to have disregard for your brother or sister even though the position you hold is right." In other words, the Christian life is others centered, but when I insist on my rights I'm being self-centered. You may know that an idol is nothing, but not every Christian is where you're at with respect to that knowledge. Perhaps a brother just came to Christ who'd previously lived his whole life under the reigns of a particular fictitious "god" we'll say, "Zeus." and Now even though in his mind he knows that Zeus doesn't exist, it bothers his conscience to score a leg of lamb at the "Zeus patio and grill" because he just came from that stuff, knows what's involved in it and it just bothers him.

He can't do it, his conscience is weak, now is it weak because it's not working, no, if anything it's overworking, it's not operating on appropriate knowledge, the connection between his head and his heart hasn't come together yet. **He's been told there's nothing to it, that there's only 1 God, yet he hasn't grown to the place of perhaps being fully convinced of that yet, he just honestly struggles with it. and So when he's enticed to partake of such things, it defiles his conscience. Because he doubts, he can't partake in faith. Remember what Paul told the Romans?** He said, *"Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."* Rom 14:22-23

So Paul is saying, "Hey, if there's a weak brother or sister around, one who doesn't have the insight that you do, that really struggles and/or is stumbled by some liberty of yours, don't insist on your liberty, walk in love." Why? Because whether I exercise a liberty, or don't exercise a liberty is irrelevant, that has nothing to do with being more or less spiritual, why do damage to someone over something that's irrelevant before God? That's what Paul is saying, notice

Vs8

But isn't this where a lot of us struggle with regard to issues relevant to Christian liberty, we think that either A.) We're more spiritual if we have the understanding that it's not a problem, or B.) We're more spiritual if we're able to see the situation for the carnality that it is and we wouldn't touch such a circumstance with a 10' poll. So the one Christian is praying for the other's growth thinking they're an uptight legalist, while the other Christian is praying for the other's deliverance thinking they're completely carnal and given over to the flesh. But here's the news flash, when it comes to issues of Christian liberty, questionable Christian practices, we're not more spiritual if we partake of them, or more spiritual if we don't. It's not about what we *do*, it's about what Christ has *done*, and again if it's a blatant area of compromise that's one thing, other than that, hey, let each man work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. **We could say this, "Dancing does not commend us to God, for neither if we dance are we the better, nor if we don't dance are we the worse." Can Christians dance? The painful truth? Some can, and some can't.**

If your conscience tells you not to, or in my case it's my dignity, than don't have anything to do with it, but if the Holy Spirit hasn't convicted you against it, than you're not more or less spiritual one way or the other. Just be sure that what you do and where you do it, you can do it as unto the Lord. David danced before the Lord, it's just not a problem, unless it bothers your conscience, if that's the case steer clear. Now, bring it back to context, there is a sensitivity issue.

Vs9-11

You see, why bring a brother or sister to ruin over something that's irrelevant whether we take it or leave it? Why insist on my right to the downfall of my brother or sister? That's what Paul is getting at there in Vs 9, "But beware lest this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak." and Then he gives the relevant illustration of that in Vs 10. He says, "If someone sees you enjoying some BBQ beef there at Hermes, and because of that justifies his own partaking of it even though it seems wrong to him by every definition of the word, you've stumbled him, you've enticed him to sin."

Oh it may not be sin to you, you have the liberty, you're in the right, but because he doesn't sense that same liberty you've emboldened him to sin against his conscience. **and This is a real problem because now I'm working ruin in my brother for whom Christ died. Jesus gave up His rights even unto death for this man, and yet I'm insisting on my right to express my liberty around him even if it hurts him, (what's wrong with that picture?) and It gets heavier still**

Vs12

You can not, I can not say or do something against a brother or sister in Christ apart from saying, or doing it against Christ. Paul got awakened this reality personally at his conversion, remember when the Lord confronted him on the road to Damascus? and He said, "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*" And he said, *'Who are You, Lord?'* Then the Lord said, *'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'*" Acts 9:4-5 **When did Saul ever persecute Jesus? Every time he persecuted one who *belonged* to Jesus. Remember when Jesus was explaining the principles of the kingdom to His disciples and He said that be for good, or for bad whatever you do to the least of these My brethren you did it to Me. Now who among us would want to exercise our liberty to such an extent as to sin against Christ?**

Vs13

Being wrong, in the right, with in my Christian rights, yet completely wrong in what I'm doing because I'm doing it with no consideration of my brother, or my sister. I'm placing my self before their well being, therein sinning against Christ. Now let me say this before we close. There's no "Trump card" whereby I'm able to impose my will on another by saying the magic words, "That really stumbles me." **Because again where then does it end? Someone comes to me and says, "It stumbles me that you don't wear a robe while you teach." So I toss on a robe, "Well, it stumbles me that you have drums and an electric guitar." So we take them out, you see where does it end. Here's the deal, that's not "stumbling" anyone, that's offending a persons legalism and neither Paul nor Jesus never acquiesced to anyone's legalism. When you stumble someone you entice them to sin, so that someone says, "Your long hair stumbles me." I'm not going to give ear to that at all, why? Because my long hair entices no one to sin, it simply perhaps offends their personal standard. and That's completely different than what Paul is speaking about here. Paul didn't write this to place power in the hands of the legalist. He wrote this to exhort us to walk in love towards one another. **So that if your conscience allows you to partake in a questionable practice, you can really help others by not imposing your liberty upon others as a measure of spirituality. "Man I can't believe that you don't decorate a Christmas tree, don't you realize there's nothing to it?" Don't do that.****

However if you're one who's conscience doesn't allow you to partake in questionable practices, you can really help others by not imposing your convictions on others as a measure of *their* spirituality. "Man I can't believe that you listen to that kind of music, don't you realize that nothing edifying can come of that, I'm really going to pray that God show you the folly in that." **Don't do that, love one another, pray for one another, and let the Lord work out the non biblical areas of conviction in a person's life. Be sensitive to the person around you who may not be where you are, lest perhaps being right with respect to knowledge, you wind up being completely wrong with respect to love.**

Prayer Points:

Lord help us to exercise love over liberty, to consider others over our own rights. That we might be a blessing not a burden or cause to sin in the lives of our brothers and sisters. and Jesus we thank You for being such an incredible example in that, being willing to forsake Your rights, to lay Your life down for us, now teach us what it means to really lay our lives down for others. To serve *You* with all that we are, and not our own ambitions or agendas. and Help us to balance our learning with love, that we be not puffed up, but built up, and instruments through which You can build up others.

You know we didn't expound on it there in Vs 11 but there's a little phrase there that carries huge implications. It says, "For whom Christ died." For whom did Christ die? He died for you, and He died for me, for God so loved the entirety of mankind, the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, so that *whoever* (and that includes you) would believe upon Him would never perish but have everlasting life. It's not found in knowing about God, but in being known *by* God. God wants to know you, to walk with you, to forgive you of your sin and wash you white like snow. "How so?" In the person of Jesus Christ The bible says that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, why not do that today? Call upon the Lord, ask Jesus into your heart, and He'll give you everlasting life.