

## First Corinthians 8:1-13

This begins a topic that goes from 8:1 until 11:1 (8:1-13; 9:1-27; 10:1-22; 10:23-11:1)

The topic is “idol food”.

This is in response to the prohibition of 5:10-11, “do not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is . . . an idolater.”

### A Cultic Meal at the Temples:

1. 8:10 the issue is eating in a temple
2. The Cultic Meal had three parts:
  - a. Preparation
  - b. Sacrifice
  - c. Feast
3. The sacrifices or the meat was divided into three parts:
  - a. Burned to the god
  - b. Worshipers portion to be eaten at the feast
  - c. The god’s portion which was placed on the table in front of the idol during the feast.
4. These meals were both religious activities and social events.

### There seems to be four problems with the Corinthians views toward idol worship which would have included these Cultic Meals for all kinds of social events.

1. “All have knowledge” and “knowledge about idols” (8:1, 4)
  - a. The Corinthians were stating and adhering to the concept that everyone knows that idols are nothing.
  - b. Anyone who believes in monotheism has knowledge that there is only one God. So then, idols and idolatry are nothing.
  - c. Paul agrees with this view.
  - d. The problem is the Corinthians application of it. Since idols are nothing then attendance at cultic meals in the temples is not an issue.
  - e. The Corinthians had done the same thing with their knowledge concerning the body, sex, and temple prostitutes. (6:12-20)
2. “Knowledge of Food” (8:8)
  - a. Food is not an issue to God
  - b. Paul agrees in 8:8
  - c. The Corinthians combined the fact that food does not bring us closer to God with the fact that idols are nothing to justify Cultic Meals.
3. Super-natural, magical Lord’s Supper
  - a. In 10:1-4 the Corinthians may believe that since they have partook of the Lord’s supper they are secure and sin is not an issue
4. Paul’s Apostolic Authority is not Respected
  - a. The Corinthians do not feel they need to honor Paul’s teaching and advice as having apostolic authority. He then can’t correct them with his opinion.
  - b. Two reasons why Paul is being rejected based on Corinthian Logic:
    - i. Paul did not accept money from the Corinthians
    - ii. Paul has himself compromised his own teaching by eating food that had been sacrificed to idols when he was with the Corinthians, but refused to eat the same food when he was with the Jews. (9:19-23)

### **Paul's Concerns That Need to be addressed:**

1. Christian ethics are based in love not knowledge. Some Corinthians are exalting their rights which are based in knowledge (truth) over what is best for other people who do not share the same knowledge. (8:1-13)
2. Paul's conduct has been used as a reason to reject his teaching and apostolic authority. This is an issue throughout this letter: 1:12; 4:18-21; 5:1-5; 9:1-3. Paul defends his apostleship and his actions in 9:1-27.
3. The Corinthians incorrect understanding and application of knowledge about idols has led them into some dangerous practices.
4. The Corinthians views of communion or the Lord's Supper have given them the confidence or the spiritual carelessness of a Christian Superman when it comes to living in sin.
5. Eating food sacrificed to idols in the privacy of their own homes without causing someone else to stumble.

### **First Corinthians 8:1-13**

The issue is a conflict between the value of knowledge and the value of love.

What directs or determines your actions? Knowledge or Love?

Why do you pursue God?

Does knowledge lead to love or does love lead to knowledge?

What is the ultimate goal of the Christian life? To act in knowledge or to act in love?

#### **8:1**

“**now about**” indicates a new subject.

“**We know that we all possess knowledge**” is Paul agreeing with the Corinthians statement that they have based their actions on.

“**Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up**” is Paul qualifying to what extent he agrees with the Corinthians.

The Corinthians “knowledge” without the general purpose of “love” is going to result in selfish actions and self-promotion.

This does not say in the Greek “we all know” but like it is translated “we all possess knowledge (“gnosis”)

“Gnosis” is one of the key Corinthian words along with “**sophia**’ (wisdom) and “logos” (speech, word)

These words are used in the introduction and in the spiritual gifts chapter.

#### **8:1**

“We all possess knowledge”

- a. This may be a Corinthian slogan which meant that what we know concerning idol meat is common information available to every believer.
- b. Or, Paul may be taking this saying and playing down knowledge since knowledge had been used by the Corinthians to indicated superior spirituality.

“puffs up” means it makes a man look big like air puffs up a balloon.

“builds up” indicates to fill with substance. “Build Up” is the word **“oikodomei”** and is used to refer to building a building. In 1 Th. 5:11 **“oikodomei”** is used to refer to building each other up.

The idea here is that a man with knowledge may look “big” but a man who acts in love is a “built up” man who has substance to his size.

Paul is in no way down playing knowledge.

Paul is simply indicating that the goal of knowledge is to manifest love.

Only when a person operates in love do they truly have spiritual substance.

### **8:2**

Does not say they don't know or don't have knowledge.

It means they are still lacking something in regard to completing the purpose of knowledge.

Knowledge that does not lead to love is knowledge that is not yet useful.

The Corinthians are still lacking something that will help them truly evaluate themselves.

**“thinks he knows”** is perfect tense and refers to “complete knowledge”

**“does not yet know”** is aorist and means they have not yet begun to have knowledge.

The man who thinks he has complete knowledge does not yet have knowledge.

### **8:3**

**“Known by God”** is a surprise. We would expect something else.

“known” could also be “recognized by God”

This verb could be either:

1. Perfect Passive – which would mean one has come to know God for themselves.
2. Middle – which would mean they are known or recognized.

### **8:4**

Paul again quotes the Corinthians theology or talking point:

**“An idol is nothing”**

Paul uses this quote and agrees with it to a certain level in verses 8:5-6, but yet we must think that Paul has another level of understanding concerning idols that he will bring up in 10:20 when he says “sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons.”

- 10:14 – “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”
- 10:20 – “No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.”

They are correct to a certain level by saying “an idol is nothing”. But, this knowledge may not be complete, and some Corinthians are not using this knowledge in love among others who do not have this knowledge.

The problem is the Corinthians are taking this knowledge and by their actions they are shoving it down the less knowledgeable or less mature believer's throats.

The younger believers are choking on the Corinthian's “knowledge” because the Corinthians with knowledge refuse to act in love.

Paul could be arrogant and correct the Corinthians knowledge or he could work with them and correct their attitude.

Paul sticks with the Great Shema of Deut. 6:4 “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

## 8:7

“**weak conscience**” refers to:

1. A mind that is NOT renewed like it should be according to Romans 12:2
2. an infant still living on milk who is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness of Hebrews 5:13
3. A babe who has not craved the pure spiritual milk of the word to grow up in their salvation of 1 Peter 2:2-3
4. The weak conscience is the “weak” minded believer, the “immature” believer, the “ignorant” believer

## 8:8

Paul quickly corrects a possible understanding that a person could be more spiritual if they ate certain food or refrained from certain food.

When Paul says “we are no worse if we do not eat” he may have been correcting the Corinthians theory that a believer is worse if they don’t eat meat offered to idols.

Likewise, when he says “no better if we do” would correct their teaching that a believer is more spiritual if he can eat meat that had come from an idol temple.

## 8:9

“**stumbling block**” is “προσκομμα” which referred to”

- a. a stone in a pathway, or
- b. an obstacle someone needed to climb over or
- c. something that would make someone trip or
- d. something that would make progress difficult.

“**Freedom**” or “liberty” is exousia (ἐξουσία) means “power of choice,” “liberty to do as you please,” “power of authority,” “power of right.”

## 8:11

Do not force your convictions on someone who does not understand them.

Do not force your freedom on someone who does not understand them.

The word “brother” is used three times in 8:11-13.

“**brother for whom Christ died**” is a threefold description of the young believer:

1. they are a brother
2. “for whom” could be “for whose sake” indicates it for this very person that Jesus came to the earth
3. “Christ died” indicates what Christ was willing to do for this person.

Now after hearing this threefold description of this brother Paul then writes what is occurring when the Corinthian believers get involved in this person’s life:

4. They are “**destroyed by your knowledge**”

This is a great case of sarcasm or a sad case of irony. The eternal Son of God comes in love to the earth for the purpose of saving this person by dying for them on the cross. But, when the Corinthians come along they destroy this very same person by carelessly flaunting their thimble of knowledge and neglecting love.