

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 19TH - 20TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

FOUNDATION (1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-3)

"NOW ABOUT FOOD SACRIFICED TO IDOLS..."

We sometimes forget how young the church is in the NT. The Corinthian church was only a few years old and about 25 years removed from the resurrection of Jesus. The majority of members of the Corinthian church were Gentiles and only had a background of pagan worship. They had lots of questions as they now navigated their culture as Christians.

START WITH THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

The foundation of every true church is Jesus Christ and His gospel. In this church, and in the Greek culture, "knowledge" was a pursuit in which some prided themselves, not Jesus.

- Even today, there are some who proclaim "knowledge" in which they boast. **But true knowledge found in Jesus humbles individuals and builds up others.**

PRIDE ALWAYS DESTROYS

Pride led some Corinthians to think they were better than others. Paul says if they think like this, and claim to be a follower of Jesus, they really aren't as knowledgeable as they think.

- Our words and actions will always reveal what's in our hearts. Being known by God is the most humbling reality because we know **it's by grace that we are known.**

LEAD WITH LOVE

Knowing we're saved by grace means we're going to be quick to extend grace to others. God's grace towards us is fueled by His love and showing grace towards others should be fueled by love, too.

- **Grace expressed through love should always be the default foundation for how believers relate to one another.**

ONE GOD (1 CORINTHIANS 8:4-6)

OK, SO WHAT ABOUT FOOD SACRIFICED TO IDOLS?

Once Paul reminds the Corinthians of the attitude they should always have towards each other, he has one more matter to consider before he deals with the question of food sacrificed to idols...

- What's an idol? Who is God? Who is Jesus?

IDOLS ARE NOTHING IN THE WORLD

In Paul's times, idols were gods worshipped by the Gentiles. There were household gods, gods over the trade guilds, and gods who ruled cities and the nations. Christianity radically changed that world because it claimed all these gods were nothing. Many in the Roman Empire called Christians **atheists** because they believed in only one true God.

YOU CAN BE RIGHT AND WRONG

Paul agreed with those in Corinth who said idols were nothing and there was only one true God. For these Corinthians, that knowledge puffed them up to the point of looking down on "weaker Christians" who were still coming to grips with these truths.

- **Christians don't discover anything, the Holy Spirit reveals truth which humbles.**

NO GODS BUT GOD

What the people of Paul's time considered gods were actually demons posing as gods (1 Corinthians 10:20). Whether they worshipped the stars and planets, nature, or any other god, they were fooled because the one true God created all things, and all things exist to bring Him glory.

- **Only our God is worthy of worship!**

JESUS IS THE ONE TRUE LORD

Jesus is God the Son who reveals the Father for all to see. God the Son was the Agent through Whom God the Father made all things, including the animals offered to the idols. The good gifts of God are to be celebrated as from the Lord. So, eating meat offered to idols isn't a sin, strictly speaking.

- **Our motives can taint our actions.**

HUMILITY (1 CORINTHIANS 8:7-13)

NEW BELIEVERS NEED NUTURING

Paul says that no one can expect a new Christian who has recently come out of pagan temple worship to immediately have the same knowledge and maturity of a seasoned Christian. They are still figuring out what it means to be a Christian.

- For a new Christian, food wasn't the issue at all. They were learning a new way of life.

PATTERNS DEVELOP HARD TO BREAK HABITS

When all a person has known is a life far from God, even with the Holy Spirit's help, leaving those old habits is difficult. Mature Christians should **work with** younger Christians and not **against** them by possibly encouraging behaviors which could lead back to bondage.

- Sometimes we can forget what it was like to be a new Christian struggling to be free.

BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE

For Paul, the issue wasn't the food, it was the weak, or new, believer. A mature Christian knows it's just steak. A new believer sees the steak you're eating as an offering to a demonic god he has renounced.

- Paul is okay with the mature Christian eating the steak in a way that doesn't ruin the new believer's conscience: privately.

OUR OBLIGATION

Jesus died to deliver sinners from bondage. Mature Christians have an obligation to preserve and nurture these new believers. When a new believer's faith is at risk, Paul will gladly lay aside his preferences for the good of the new believer. This is **grace, love, and humility** personified.

- **Loving God means loving people.**

MAKE ROOM FOR PREFERENCES

Eating meat offered to idols wasn't sinful. Doing so at the expense of a weaker believer was sinful.

Preferences are behaviors for which no clear biblical teaching prohibits, but wisdom may still be needed as to whether it's beneficial or not, like eating in an idol's temple.

- **Every Christian is called to mature so that preferences don't divide believers.**

HUMILITY

- Are we seeing an increase in humility as we mature as Christians?
- **Do people around us marvel at what we know more than how we love others?**
- Do we fight for our privileges, or do we willingly lay them down at Jesus' feet?
- **Are there times when we expect more of others than we expect of ourselves?**

GROWING IN MATURITY

- Are we **reading the word and praying daily, attending worship weekly, and regularly meeting for accountability?**
- Are we more offended by the remaining sin we see in us rather than the sin we see in others?
- Have we remained as a weaker brother or sister for too long?

CULTURE VS. CHRIST

- Do we value politics in such a way that new believers think our hope is in a party and not in Jesus?
- Do we value entertainment in such a way that new believers think our joy is in distraction and not in discipleship?
- Does the world hold power over our joy or do the promises of the Word?

DISCIPLES WHO MAKE DISCIPLES

- Do we explain to new believers not just the "what" of following Jesus but the "why?"
- **Are we patient, kind, and gentle with new believers?**
- Do we invite new believers to share life with us?
- **Does our love for Jesus "ooze" out in how we relate to others?**
- **John 13:34-35**