

Sunday, February 5, 2017—I Corinthians 8:12-13: Pauline Principles on the Proper Use of Liberty

### Introduction

- Last week we continued our study of I Corinthians 8 by looking at verses 7 through 11. In summation, we observed the following.
- Verse 7—while everyone had knowledge of the practice of meat offered unto idols in verse 1 not everyone understood the doctrinal contents of verses 4 through 6. Most importantly, that “an idol is nothing in the world.”
- Verse 8—what one eats or refrains from eating does not commend them unto God. The Corinthians in their pride, were thinking they would gain something from God by eating meat offered unto idols as a display of their knowledge of the grace of God.
- Verse 9—in the context, Paul doesn’t want a believer who knows and understands verses 4 through 6 the use their liberty in such a way so as to cause a weaker brother who doesn’t possess such knowledge to defile their conscience or stumble. When a strong believer exercise his or her liberty in a way that is determinantal to a weaker believer’s spiritual welfare, i.e., causes stumbling, they have exceeded what is permissible.
  - Believers have no right to give up their liberty, but they have perfect liberty to give up their rights.
    - Galatians 5:13—the same liberty that affords believers the right to eat meat sacrificed until idols provides the freedom not to eat as well.
  - Don’t defile your brother’s conscience by paying more attention to your “rights” than to your “responsibilities.” In other words, walk in charity toward the brethren.
- Verses 10-11—this person is using the liberty gained form their knowledge that an “idol is nothing” to “sit at meat in the idol’s temple.” Notice that this man is using his liberty is a such a way that he is publicly seen eating by the weaker brother. In other words, he is flaunting his liberty. He is not purchasing the meat and eating it in the privacy of his own home. No, he is doing so publicly. This type of conduct on the part of the more knowledgeable saint possess the capacity to emboldened a weaker saint to act in a manner contrary to their conscience. Taken together verses 10 and 11 demonstrate that when a weaker brother is constrained or emboldened by another’s actions to eat meat scarified to idols, he really does sin.
  - Romans 14:14, 23

## Romans 8 and 21<sup>st</sup> Century American Culture

- As I said last Sunday, as American's we don't typically face the issue or question of meat offered in sacrifice unto idols in our culture. That doesn't mean that we don't face other issues to which the principles addressed in I Corinthians 8 absolutely apply.
- Romans 14:1-3—the immediate context here is not dealing with meat offered unto idols. Rather it is dealing with what meat is it permissible for believers to eat.
- Romans 14:5-6—here Paul is dealing with those who would esteem one day as more important than another.
  - Colossians 2:16-17—in the context this verse is dealing with the meat, drink, and holydays of the Mosaic Law.
- Romans 14:10—begins by asking two questions: 1) “But why dost thou judge thy brother?” and 2) “Why dost thou set at nought thy brother?”
- These two questions refer back to what Paul said in verse 3. There are two different groups of people that Paul is addressing here: 1) him that eateth, and 2) him that eateth not. According to verse 2, the one that eats only herbs is “weak” thereby making the one who eats “all things” strong in this context.
  - Strong = eats “all things”
  - Weak = “eateth herbs”
- According to verse 3 the stronger believer is not to “despise” (to condemn; to scorn; to disdain; to have the lowest opinion of. Abhor) the weaker believer that does not eat. Likewise, the weaker saint is not “judge” him that eats “all things.”
- Romans 14:4-8—the main point of these verses is that both weak and strong believers belong to the Lord. Consequently, Paul calls them brothers in verse 10.
- Romans 14:10—since the weak believer and the strong believer are both brothers in Christ, Paul addresses one question to each group.
  - Weak—why do you persist in judging your brother?
  - Strong—why do you continue to set at nought (same Greek word as “despise” in verse 3) thy brother?
- According to verse 10, this type of behavior is inappropriate because all believers will stand before the JSC.

- Romans 14:13-16—Paul clearly says that “there is nothing unclean of itself.” But to the one who esteems something to be unclean to him it is “unclean.”
- Romans 14:19-23—in Romans 14 we see the same principles as I Corinthians 8 but not in the context of meat offered unto idols.
- Here are some things that saints in our day, even Grace Believers, struggle with.
  - *Clean and unclean food*—is okay to eat bacon and shrimp? Organic verses non-organic.
    - I Corinthians 8:8—one’s diet does not commend them unto God.
  - *Alcohol*—even though its lawful and permissible many struggle with its use and consumption.
    - Ephesians 5:18—drunkenness is clearly not becoming of a saint.
    - I Timothy 5:23
  - *Music*—contemporary music in church or one’s personal life.
  - *Holidays*—Christmas and Easter are pagan holidays that believers ought not celebrate. Paul never tells us to celebrate these days. If you have a Christmas tree in your house you are worshiping Baal.
    - Genesis 40:20
    - Matthew 14:6—the problem with legalism in all its manifestations is that it is widely inconsistent. Don’t post on social media about how evil these holidays are and then post pictures of yourself celebrating Christmas with your family in front of a Christmas tree.
- Here are some Pauline principles to consider when dealing with these questionable practices.
  - I Corinthians 6:12, 10:23—all things are lawful but not all things are expedient. Things that have capacity to bring you under their power and are not edifying are to be avoided. These are not a wise use of your liberty.
  - Romans 14:19—we should be following after the things which make for peace.
    - Romans 12:18
  - Galatians 5:1—a believer has not right to give up their liberty in favor of someone else’s system of religious performance.

- Galatians 5:13—our liberty should not be used as an occasion to the flesh. Our liberty was given to us to serve one another with love.
- I Corinthians 8:10—consider the setting and context. The public flaunting of liberty for the sake of demonstrating how much liberty one has is dangerous and arrogant. What one chooses to do in the privacy of their own home with their own family is between them and the Lord.

### **I Corinthians 8:12-13**

- **But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.  
Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.**
- A sin against the weak conscience of a fellow believer is equally to a sin against Christ. This is opposite of walking with love and charity toward the saints. This is an example of using one's liberty as an occasion to the flesh.
- Paul concludes the chapter by saying that if eating the meat offends one/some of the brethren he will refrain from doing so for the spiritual benefit of that saint.