

Intro: Happy Father's Day

1. Today we are in 1 Corinthians 8
 - a. This is a very important passage concerning Christian living.
 - b. I also believe that this passage is especially applicable to fathers and children on this Father's Day.
2. As a reminder, Paul is now responding to questions that were asked of him by the believers in Corinth.
 - a. 1 Cor 7:1 "*Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me...*"
 - i. Then in chap 7 Paul provided instructions for singles, married couples and those who were divorce or widowed.
 - b. Ch 8, 9, & 10 deal with Christian liberty.
 - i. One of the main issues was eating meat that was sacrificed to an idol.
 - c. Perhaps you are thinking, "That's not applicable today." Meat and idols?
 - i. We don't have to worry about McDonalds dedicating your burger meat to a pagan idol.
3. What is the application for us today?
 - a. Paul's instructions over the next few chapters can help us in making decision over matters that are not clearly addressed in the scriptures.
4. Let's look at our passage now to see what relevant applications we might find for ourselves.

Read 1 Cor 8:1-13 and Pray¹

1. What we'll see today is that our passage addresses "gray area" issues.
 - a. There are a number of debatable items that relate to today...
 - b. Watching TV &/or movies (R-rated), dancing, drinking, smoking, etc.

¹ Unless otherwise marked, all scriptures taken from the New King James Version. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

2. What do we do when what we want to do is not explicitly addressed in the scriptures?
 - a. What we'll find is that the bible provides implicit instructions that help us decide on issues that are not explicitly addressed.
3. Danger, especially in the church of:
 - a. Raising 'non-essentials' to 'The Essentials' – That is a legalist church
 - b. Lowering 'The Essential' to the 'Non-essentials' – That is a compromising church
4. Augustine: "*In Essentials, Unity; in Non-essentials, Liberty; in All Things, Charity*"

Let's look at our passage and see how that applies.

1 Corinthians 8:1a ¹ **Now concerning things offered to idols:**

1. In that day in Corinth, idol worshippers would bring their animal to the pagan temple to be sacrificed.
 - a. A portion would be offered on that pagan altar.
 - b. A portion was kept by the pagan priest.
 - c. Then the rest of the meat would be sold in the market.
 - d. Often times, this meat was the best bargain for the buck (this meat was the cheapest).
2. This created a dilemma:
 - a. Purchasing the cheapest meat seemed to be the responsible thing to do as it relates to good money management, but...
 - b. Was the meat "contaminated" if you will, because of its association with pagan practices?
3. So the question was asked of Paul, is it alright to buy and eat this meat.
 - a. Thus Paul writes (vs 1)...

1 Corinthians 8:1 ¹ Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

1. There are three important words to make note of in this chapter: *knowledge*, *love*, and *conscience*. They are all related. Keep in mind that...
 - a. *Knowledge* must be balanced with *love*.
 - b. Actions must be tempered by the *conscience* of others.
2. Paul's instructions help us understand that the purchasing Aphrodite Angus or Hermes Hamburgers was not an issue of value and economy, but rather an issue of the heart and mind.
 - a. Let's keep looking...

1 Corinthians 8:2 ² And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

1. Here Paul is talking about "*the know it all*". (Do you know a "know it all")
 - a. It just irritates me when someone always says, "*I know*."
 - b. No matter what you say, they respond, "*I know*."
 - i. If that's you today, I hope I haven't offended you, and I really hope that you'll listen to what I have to say.
 - c. You see, the "know it all" often walks around spending more time trying to convince others of how much they know when they are in actuality just showing everyone how little they really do know.
2. Here's another way of looking at it...
 - a. Have you ever set out to really learn something, but in the process of learning that thing, it just leads you into the awareness that the more you learn, the more there is that you don't know or understand?
 - b. I find that true with studying the bible. The more I study it, the more I realize there's so much there that I just don't know.
 - c. That doesn't mean I just give up, no! Nor does it mean I'm not learning; I am.

- d. It's kind of like those lines you stand in for the rides at Disney or Universal.
 - i. You think that once you make it down that straight-away, that you'll be on the ride, but at the end of the straight-away you see that it turns into a new previously unseen area with more people waiting.
- 3. What should be happening is this: As you fix your eyes on learning some particular thing, once you learn it, along with this new knowledge comes the realization that there's more to learn.
 - a. But you see, there are some people who are just not open to experience that process because they already know it all.
 - b. That's why Paul says (paraphrased), "If he thinks he knows it, he really doesn't know it at all." The 'know it all' is really just ignorant.

But in verse 3 Paul makes an important leap, from the mind to the heart...

1 Corinthians 8:3 ³ But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

1. In Roman 8:28 it says, *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*
2. 1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*
3. But, consider 1 John 4:20–21 ²⁰ *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?* ²¹ *And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

The issue of loving both God and loving our brother is at the heart of Paul's message to the Christians in Corinth, so let's keep looking...

1 Corinthians 8:4-6 ⁴ Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one. ⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), ⁶ yet for us *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*.

1. The logical conclusion is I can eat anything I want.
 - a. In Acts 10:15 in a vision Peter was told, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.”
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:4 *For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving*
 - c. A non-existent god can’t contaminate a piece of meat.

2. Proper knowledge of the Lord tells me that God is god over all and that Jesus is Lord over all and we live for Him.
 - a. So I can go ahead and eat that meat; who cares?
 - b. But love and conscience (the conscience of others) tells me maybe its best not to eat that meat even though I am free to.

3. Are there other examples of things I can do, but maybe I shouldn’t?
 - a. Texas v. Johnson case of 1989 established that a certain activity was protected as an act of free speech under the First Amendment – Flag burning.
 - b. I can legally burn the U.S. flag, but why would I want to? Not only would I offend myself by doing it, but countless others would be offended as well.

1 Corinthians 8:7 ⁷ However, *there is* not in everyone that knowledge;

1. That would certainly be the case with baby Christians, they lack the knowledge to make the proper decision

2. There are two groups of baby Christians.
 - a. New Christians that lack understanding simply and logically because they have not had time to learn it yet.
 - i. They are like natural babies that are just learning how to walk; they just don’t quite have it down
 - ii. But to their credit, day by day, they get a little better.
 - b. Christians with stunned growth.

- i. They've been a Christian for a while, but are not growing.
- ii. In the physical world, we call someone who is slow in growing up 'Retarded'.
- iii. I don't want to go so far as to call any of you that, but the truth is Christians should not remain infants for long.

But then there's another group who won't eat and it has nothing to do with being a baby Christian; let's see...

1 Corinthians 8:7 ⁷ However, *there is* not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

1. As you can imagine, there were those who grew up being entrenched in pagan worship and because of this, certain things have been seared into their minds with permanent associations in place.
 - a. Even though they are free, because of their conscience and those painful associations, they cannot partake in anything that is related to that past practice.
 - b. For example: have you recently heard an old song that brought back to your mind, as clear as day, a memory from childhood or high school?
 - i. When I hear Bryan Adams' raspy voice, bam, brings me back to my high school day.
 - c. But some things bring back bad memories, and with some of the Christians in Corinth, it didn't matter how much freedom they had, they just couldn't bring themselves to eat that pagan meat.
 - i. So, can you understand why some would want to avoid the bargain beef because of the bad memories associated with that meat?
2. Note, the super sensitive is not super holy, instead Paul calls them weak.
 - a. Avoiding certain foods or activities does not make someone holy.

Listen to what 1 Corinthians 8:8-9 says... ⁸ But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. ⁹ But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

1. God cares about the heart. Where is your heart this morning? Where is your heart come Monday morning? Where is your heart come Friday night?
 - a. That's the issue, not meat.
2. Don't miss the clear warning in these verses: Beware, don't be a stumbling block.
 - a. We should be a stepping stone rather than a stumbling block.
3. Christian, please meditate on verse 9 for just a moment. **“But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.”**
 - a. What affect do your actions have on others.
4. Since its Father's Day, let me ask you dads here today, what affect do your actions have on your kids?
 - a. What are you teaching your kids through your actions?
 - b. Kids learn more from your actions and example than anything else.

1 Corinthians 8:10-11 ¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? ¹¹ And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

1. Dads, do you drink? Do you smoke? Do you curse? Do you watch questionable movies?
 - a. Yes there is liberty there to do a lot, but remember, your kids are watching.
 - b. Let me tell you, a child's conscience is weak and anything you do can embolden your child to do the same.
 - c. If you have smokes (cigarettes) in the house, alcohol, rated R movies with horrible language and graphic/explicit sex scenes, your kids will figure out a way to get their hand on them.
2. And these same principles apply to the Christians around you.
 - a. Paul is teaching us that we must be sensitive to those who could be stumbled by the liberties we take.

- b. Example: If you opened a bag of Jalapeno Cheetos and said help yourself, I know I wouldn't be able to stop after eating only one.
 - i. I love those things and I would keep eating them until my fingers are stained bright orange.
- c. There are some, who in a similar fashion, cannot stop with just one drink so they avoid it altogether knowing that there is no in between for them.
 - i. But, if I were to go to the club on Friday night and have a few Bud Lights with the guys, what message would that be sending to the guy who struggle with drinking responsibly?
- 3. This application is not limited to drinking alcohol alone, it's anything that can stumble another brother or sister in Christ.
- 4. To stay in context with the passage, let me quickly read 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 to you
 - a. We will expound this passage in chapter 10 when we get to the 10th chapter.

1 Corinthians 8:12 ¹² **But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.**

- 1. You can't walk around saying, "I have liberty in Christ to do whatever I want so leave me alone."
 - a. If our actions wound another believer, then that is a sin against Christ.

That's why in verse 13 Paul says...

1 Corinthians 8:13 ¹³ **Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.**

- 1. The two commandments, Love God and Love your neighbor and if we follow Paul instructions then we are loving our neighbor.
- 2. There are limits to this. Some people's conscience and convictions are extreme.
 - a. Some people think it's absolutely wrong for a woman to wear make-up.

- b. So then, I should ask Sonya not to wear make-up? No.
- c. We can't be man pleasers; if we tried to make everyone happy, we would go crazy!
- d. How do you know when to be sensitive to conscience and when it's okay to ignore a zealot?
 - i. Walk closely with the Lord and His Holy Spirit will direct your paths.

Conclusion:

1. I want to reemphasize that this chapter isn't so much about meat as it is in learning that our actions affect others.
 - a. Just because we have a tremendous amount of freedom and liberty in Christ, we do not have free license to do anything we want.
2. 1 Cor 6:12 and 10:23 – provide the scope and limitation of Christian liberty.
 - a. Is it helpful? Does it help you out? Personal progress toward a desired goal.
 - i. Running short on time, it's helpful to drive over walking.
 - ii. The goal is Jesus.
 - b. Authority – will it enslave me? I'm free to pick it up only if I'm free to put it down.
 - c. Does it hinder others?
3. Fathers, your children have a weak conscience; set the bar high and give them a good example to follow.