

# Christian Liberty

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Preacher: Henry Dyck

- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning, everyone. Welcome to service this morning. It's been a blessing thus far already.! Freedom. We love our freedom, don't we? And we consider this land we live in Canada, a land of freedom.
- And though we can already argue that in certain areas these freedoms are being removed, and yet still we enjoy many freedoms in this land.
- For us as Christians, there is freedom as well. We are richly blessed in the Lord to be loosed from the bondage of sin and to walk in freedom.
- What does this freedom look like? Is there sacrifice involved in the freedom that we have in Christ?
- Thanks, Jan, for reading the text for us this morning. Paul is dealing with yet another issue in the church in Corinth.
- [ 1 : 3 3 ]     So, exploring an issue that the Corinthian believers dealt with, and that was idol offerings.
- And so we know that Corinth was a pagan city. It was a major trade center.
- And so at any time, people from the world over would be there. And so there's many, many religions represented there. And numerous temples set up there, you know, dedicated to their false gods.
- And so just the background of what's happening here. You know, it was common for there to be religious feasts of one sort or another.
- And animal sacrifice happening. And so the meat that would be offered, you know, just as the children of Israel were in the sacrificial system throughout the Old Testament, you know, pagan society was kind of adopting these things as well, right?
- [ 2 : 5 0 ]     Where they were making sacrifices or offerings to their idols as well. And so, kind of the same concepts that there are feasts involved with it, there's food involved.
- And so these animals would be sacrificed to their false gods, and they would have these feasts. And this meat that had been sacrificed would be eaten during these meals.
- And of course, you know, as believers, we are not taken out of this world. We mingle with pagan society around us. And so, you know, there's the chances that must have been in Corinth as well for believers to be invited to these feasts as well.
- And so we have the question, you know, should they be attending these feasts? You know, and what wasn't eaten during these feasts would be brought out to the markets, and it would be sold there in the markets.
- And so, you know, even for believers to be shopping in these markets, you know, should they be buying up this meat that they know has been sacrificed to idols?
- [ 4 : 1 0 ]     And so, how far does Christian liberty go? A few things that I want to pull out of our text this morning is a reminder that above all else, we are to love.
- And as well, though we know there is only one God, the world knows many gods. Lastly, you know, what is knowledge to some can be a stumbling block to someone else.

So, digging into the text here, starting in verses 1 through 3.

Now, concerning things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

But if anyone loves God, this one is known by him. So, the first line in this chapter identifies what we're dealing with.

[ 5 : 28 ] You know, concerning things offered to idols. It doesn't give us any more details than that, but it sets the tone. We know what the issue is.

And so, I believe, you know, we all know what idols are. Anything that is given more importance than God is an idol in our life.

And so, the issue in Corinth, if we're observing the context of the passage, you know, they were dealing with offerings to graven images, to false gods that were erected and worshipped in temples.

Idols. In our society today, we're not so familiar with this, but it is out there.

Still, idols are all around us, and they come in many different forms. Some maybe more common ones are that for us today.

[ 6 : 45 ] Drugs or alcohol, money. Maybe it's our vehicles, our celebrities, or even sports and sports teams.

All shapes and forms. These can be idols to us. And so, concerning things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge.

We're humans. We're created in God's image. And He has given us a brain to use. To think.

To learn. To memorize. Or in other words, to gain knowledge. And so, we all have knowledge.

And we know that we do. So, what does knowledge do? Knowledge can be shared with others.

[ 8 : 04 ] It helps us, you know, for ourselves to get things done. It can build confidence. And knowledge, you know, is the beginning of wisdom as well.

Or, as our text tells us, it puffs us up. When we get to the point, we're so filled with knowledge that we think there's nothing about this particular thing that I don't know.

There's an attitude that comes with it. An attitude that creeps in. And it's not always a good attitude. You know, we can be confident in, you know, understanding something, having full knowledge of something, but there's a, there's a line to tread there.

It can get into, you know, a bad attitude about it. And we, maybe we look down on others. You know, thinking we know better than they do.

We mix it with what we consider freedoms. And no one or nothing can stop us from doing our own will.

[ 9 : 26 ] what is better than knowledge? Love is better than knowledge.

It says that love, but love edifies. It builds others up. It puts them before ourselves.

And as believers, we are called to love.

In the new covenant that Christ has given to us, we have been given two commandments. To love God and to love one another.

Two commandments, both of them are to love. And if we love God, it says He knows us. There is, then, a relationship between ourselves and Him.

[ 10 : 36 ] God is love. And He demonstrated it to us first. In love, He sent His Son down to a hostile world.

A world that hated Him and wanted nothing to do with Him. For such people, the Lord Jesus was willing to come and to hang on a cross for.

Because He loved, He gave His life that we might be saved. And so, to love a God and Savior as that is all the difference in my life and I trust in yours as well.

And so, as verse 1 tells us, knowledge, knowledge is good. We need knowledge, but love is of more value.

One commentary puts it this way, love, not knowledge, is the key to Christian conduct. Let's read on in our text.

[ 12 : 11 ] Verse 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.

For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords, 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. We have an argument for knowledge in these verses, knowledge regarding idols.

Idols. We read the statement there, we know that an idol is nothing in this world. A statement like that, it speaks of knowledge, of a level of maturity in the believer that makes such a statement.

Idols are dead. There is no life in them. there is no divinity, no power in them to save and to deliver.

[ 13 : 37 ] Idols are a product of man's imagination and formed by man's hands. Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 46.

look at verses five through seven.

of the Lord speaking here.

He says, to whom will you liken me and make me equal and compare me that we should be alike? They lavish gold out of the bag and weigh silver on the scales.

They hire a goldsmith and he makes it a god. They prostrate themselves. Yes, they worship. They bear it on the shoulder. They carry it and set it in its place and it stands.

[ 14 : 49 ] From its place it shall not move. Though one cries out to it, yet it cannot answer nor save him out of his trouble. It's my description of an idol created by the hands of a person, carried around by the hands of a person, but there is no life and no saving power.

God is no God and still these idols, these gods are everywhere. As our text mentions, even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords, heaven and earth are filled with them.

Multitudes worship them and seek to appease them. There's the Baals and the Dagon, the Ashtoreths and the Molech's that we read of in the Old Testament scriptures to the idols of today, the money, the drugs, the alcohols, celebrities and so on.

Idols take all sorts of shapes and forms and sizes and most of us, we can understand that.

We possess that knowledge and it is good knowledge to have. And we know too, as our text tells us that there is one God, our Heavenly Father, from whom we receive all things.

[ 16 : 58 ] He is our creator. He is the author of life. He is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end.

God and as there is one God, there is one Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Messiah, our mediator.

Through Him, all that is created, or all, through Him, all was created that is created. We live because He lives.

We owe everything to Him for what He has done for us. And so, the argument that comes out of these verses is that, you know, because we have knowledge of idols, that they are powerless, you know, when it comes to these offerings, we don't need to hold back.

We don't need to abstain. There's nothing to it. You know, and in the Corinthians case, they argued that eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols didn't matter.

[ 18 : 20 ] They knew these idols were nothing. They couldn't do anything. And so, therefore, the meat was just that. It was meat. Just like any other meat.

And so, they used this knowledge to push the idea that they had every right to eat this meat and that no one should hinder them from doing that.

In these verses, Paul, the author, writing, he uses the words we and us. And so, he's saying he's in agreement with these believers regarding their knowledge of idols and of meat.

He agrees idols are dead. They are powerless. That meat is meat. Yet, he doesn't agree with the attitude that they are displaying.

They are being puffed up by their knowledge. If we look forward to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 23, Paul writes, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.

[ 19 : 46 ] All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. And so, that could be applied here, knowing that, yes, meat is meat, you know, and if they've offered it to their idols, that's them.

And to me, it's just meat. It is lawful for me, but, you know, saying that, you know, just because it's lawful for me doesn't mean it's always helpful.

And so, he's warning of the danger of being puffed up by knowledge. knowledge. I was thinking of an example that could apply for us today.

And so, I thought of, you know, a common example, a fairly simple example.

And this is only one. There could be many different ones. I thought of the example, you know, consuming alcohol.

[ 20 : 58 ] We have knowledge of alcohol, how it can affect a person. But we know for ourselves as well when enough is enough.

Scripture doesn't condemn alcohol or forbid it, yet it tells us not to become drunk, to not be influenced by excess of it, right?

And so, we possess this knowledge, we know our limits, and so there's nothing wrong with us having a glass of alcohol now and then, right?

Question to ponder. Well, let's just hold that thought for now, and we'll circle back to it in a little bit. Continuing on in verses 7 and 8 in our text, chapter 8.

and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 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.

[ 22 : 25 ] However, start at verse 7, however, every story has two sides. The other side is not everyone has this knowledge.

We can never assume. There is always variation in the level of maturity in a Christian church, even here this morning.

Some have years of experience behind them in the faith. Others, maybe a little bit less. And still others are very new to the faith.

And so the level of knowledge varies greatly. Some are confident in their knowledge and maybe don't think twice before doing certain things.

Others who are less confident, they have to take extra care to avoid certain things.

[ 23 : 41 ] Or else they might slip back into old habits, habits that they may have just come out of or are working on coming out of. And so the example in our text, you know, it speaks of individuals having lived within the pagan society around them who have knowledge as well of idols and the offerings to them.

But they may have worshipped these same idols just recently. And so they're just coming out of that. And now, knowing what has been done with this food, it's causing their minds to slip back into their old ways and they defile themselves.

It causes them to stumble, to sin. It's a weak area that they still struggle in, an area where they do not have victory yet.

What can happen to such an individual if they see others indulging in what they themselves struggle with?

Continuing on in verse 9, But beware, lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak.

[ 25 : 18 ] 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?

And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Earlier in our text, we saw Paul agree with the knowledge that the others had of idols and food. But here, though, is a clean break.

He would not take that knowledge as far as they did. Their knowledge had puffed them up and they felt their liberty was their right and others could not influence it.

And so here is that warning that they were to beware that their liberty didn't cause a weaker brother or sister to stumble.

[ 26 : 36 ] How could that happen? Let's go back to the example that I had of drinking alcohol. Say that I go to a restaurant this afternoon for lunch and I order some alcohol to go with my meal.

Nothing wrong with that, right? I know that I'm okay having one drink. Everything will be fine. It won't do anything. Then a weaker believer walks in and he sees the drink sitting in front of my plate.

Maybe this person has struggled with alcoholism in the past. It has controlled their life and they're just starting to come out of it.

And so they see me with this drink and they think hmm look at that. He's having a drink with his meal and it causes them to think that would taste pretty good.

I think I'll have just one too. Just one will be fine. I'll make sure I stop it at one. I won't let it go any further. But because of this person's past that one drink stirs up the old taste buds and the desire for more consumes them.

[ 28 : 26 ] And on the way home they can't help but stop at a liquor store and go get some more. And in short order they're right back into old habits.

I was within my rights with my one drink. It was lawful for me. I had knowledge that for myself nothing would come of it.

It wouldn't go any further. But was it good? It was Paul Roy writes in chapter 10 1 Corinthians. It is lawful for me but it isn't always good.

In this example was it good? My indulgence caused a weaker believer to think that they could do as I did and it sent them right back into what they had been fighting to get out of.

Christ died for this person as much as he did for me. And my actions stemming from my knowledge and what I considered was my right caused another to fall back to an idol that had previously controlled them.

[ 29 : 59 ] Christ no longer is the one Lord in their life. He has to make room for another false Lord and a false God in this person's life.

as verse 12 tells us I have sinned against this brother or this sister and weakened them even more.

But I have not only sinned against that person but against Christ himself. Christ cares for every soul and we need to take care not to cause another to stumble.

We need to walk in love and to put others before ourselves to consider them to be considerate of them and to to edify right to love love edifies it builds up to build them up not to bring them down.

let's turn back to Isaiah to Isaiah chapter 40 this time Isaiah 40 yes I'm still in Psalm no wonder it wasn't lining up Isaiah chapter 40 Isaiah chapter 40 Isaiah 40, verse 11.

[ 31 : 59 ] Speaking of the Lord here. And it says, He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom and gently lead those who are with young.

And so it talks of the care that the Lord has for His flock. And if we specifically look at the lambs within this flock, I think that it is referring to younger believers who might be considered weaker for their inexperience or their lack of knowledge as of yet.

You know, we all receive special care from the Lord. It says that He will feed His flock. He will feed all of them like a shepherd, like a good shepherd.

Regarding the lambs, you know, they are special in His sight as they are young in the faith and they need extra care.

And He knows that. And so He gives them that extra care. He takes them in His arm and He carries them in His bosom.

[ 33 : 27 ] And so it is then fitting that we are warned not to allow our liberty to cause these lambs to stumble.

What is the proper course of action towards our brothers and sisters in Christ? Paul sums it up in the final verse of the chapter in our text.

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

Anything that causes another to stumble, I will stay away from. I have my rights, I have my freedoms, but if I know that someone else might be struggling in this area, I am willing to give up those rights, to give up those freedoms in order to love that other individual, to edify, to build them up.

We should always choose love over knowledge. The commandment is to love, not to pursue knowledge, to exercise our rights.

[ 35 : 11 ] Our rights always come in second to love. Just a final thought.

Choosing love rests with the strong, not the weak. If we have the knowledge, we should know to choose love, not to expect the weaker ones to choose love, to allow us our rights.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning. Lord, we thank you for your grace towards us, for your mercy.

And Lord, we thank you for how you have created us, how you give us knowledge. Lord, you have given us a brain that learns knowledge.

But we need to take that knowledge a step further and to act upon it, to make it wisdom, to know what is the right thing to do in proper times.

[ 36 : 34 ] and so, Lord, we know the commandment is to love, to love you and to love one another. Lord, help us to fully obey these commandments, not to push our freedom, to push our rights, but to choose love.

And that if it might hinder, that what we do might hinder a weaker brother or sister, that we are totally okay with backing off, with choosing love over our freedoms.

Lord, give us strength to love. Pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.