

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

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[0 : 00] If you're looking at the new Bible, that is page 956. We are resuming our series in 1 Corinthians after taking a short break around Easter time.

But we'll be plowing ahead, entering into the second half of this book. So let's read together 1 Corinthians chapter 8, reading the whole chapter this morning.

Now concerning food offered to idols. We know that all of us possess knowledge. This knowledge pops up, but love builds up.

If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that an idol has no real existence and that there is no God but one.

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords. Yet for us, there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist.

[1 : 10] And one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. However, not all possess this knowledge.

But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled. Food will not commend us to God.

We are no worse off if we do not eat and no better off if we do. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone who sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged if his conscience is weak to eat food offered to idols?

And so by your knowledge, this weak person is destroyed. The brother from whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. Well, the topic of today's sermon is food sacrificed to idols.

[2 : 20] At least that's the headache of the ESV. If you were raised in a Western culture, that topic might seem completely irrelevant. You might wonder, why does Paul spend the next three chapters discussing this issue?

What, if anything, does this have to do with me? You know, a few years ago, somebody actually admitted to me that they had looked at the sermon card and read the passage that we were going to be preaching on and decided that it just wasn't worth coming to church that day.

So I'm glad you didn't do that. I'm wondering for you, don't tune out. Here's a couple reasons why this passage is relevant. At first, the issue of food offered to idols is still relevant in many cultures.

Recently, I was talking to another pastor who had preached for 1 Corinthians to his church. And the members of his church were mostly African and Caribbean immigrants. And he said, you know, a whole section about sex and marriage, chapters 6 and 7.

I thought that could be controversial, but pretty much everyone seemed to agree, in principle at least, with what Paul was saying. But then we got the food offered to idols. And this was the most controversial section of the whole book.

[3 : 33] One person said, whenever I go home and my mom puts a meal, she'll pour out some of the food on an image that sits in our front yard as a way of warding off evil spirits.

Or maybe you're from an Asian culture. What about the traditional meals eaten in honor of ancestors? Or is it in worship of ancestors? Are they harmless cultural traditions?

Are they pagan religious rituals? Should Christians not make a big deal out of them? Or should Christians completely refrain from participating in them? You know, if you go into most of the Thai restaurants in New Haven, you may notice that in the entryway, there's often a little statue of the Buddha.

And there's often a little food placed right in front of you. So for some of you, these may be very real issues that have potential to cause a lot of tension in your family or among your close friends who follow a different religious tradition.

And the question there is, how do I remain loyal to Christ without unnecessarily offending people who are close to me? Where do I draw the line between cultural expressions and religious practices?

[4 : 43] How do I show respect to people who I love without endorsing practices that don't reflect God's will? So we'll try to address some of those questions over the next few weeks, especially when we get to chapter 10.

But before we go on, let me just point out that in every culture there are some biblical teachings that deeply resonate with our intuitions. They make total sense to us. And we say, that's true wisdom.

That's beautiful. There are other biblical teachings that sound strange and countercultural and we inherently tend to resist them. Now from the Bible's perspective, that makes sense because we're all created in the image of God and yet we're all deeply flawed and corrupted by sin.

But since every culture and every person is different, the parts of the Bible that you most struggle with that seem most implausible to you may be the parts that are most obviously true and uncontroversial and make intuitive sense from someone else's perspective or someone else's culture.

You know, it's helpful to realize this. Your own doubts and questions are largely determined by your cultural background and the historical moment in which you live. That doesn't mean you should simply dismiss them or ignore them.

[5 : 59] But it does mean you shouldn't see them as absolute, unchangeable objections which every reasonable person would share. If you're really struggling with any biblical teaching, it's helpful to ask, what is it that I'm assuming that makes it so hard for me to accept what the Bible says in this particular area?

Well, so food offered to idols is a concern for many Christians today. Second, the second reason why this is relevant is Paul's primary concern in this section is not actually just whether you should eat food offered to idols.

If that was Paul's only concern, he could have skipped chapter 8, chapter 9, most of chapter 10 and gone right to chapter 10, verse 21 and 25 and 27, where he finally answers that question.

And if you want to know Paul's answer, should you eat food sacrificed offered to idols, his answer is this. Number one, don't participate in religious feasts which involve idol worship.

That's 10:21. But second, if you're in the marketplace or you're at somebody's house, you can eat whatever you want as long as it's not explicitly associated with promoting idolatry.

[7 : 11] As long as by eating you're not actively promoting it. Now, we'll get to untangling that in a couple of weeks. So for Paul, eating food offered to idols, in the context of pagan religious feasts, it's not actually simply a matter of opinion over which Christians may differ.

Sometimes people think that this passage is talking about the same thing as Romans 14, which talks about opinions or disputable matters. There's actually a difference. Romans 14 does not mention food offered to idols.

It's talking more about flea and unclean foods, which is sort of a different issue. And so Paul agrees with Acts 15, the decree of the Jerusalem Council, and Revelation 2, where the Apostle John warns against Christians eating food offered to idols.

So the New Testament is actually consistent on this issue, which is something I didn't always realize. But that's, I think, the best way to put things together.

Now, if that's the answer, why does Paul spend three whole chapters on this topic? And the reason is Paul's more concerned with a bunch of bigger issues that are related. So three of the issues Paul's concerned with in these chapters are, one, how should the Christian church relate to the outside unbelieving world?

[8 : 33] Second, how should Christians with different social backgrounds and different opinions relate to one another? Third, how does your freedom in Christ relate to your responsibility to other people in the body of Christ?

So these are three of the issues that Paul will be dealing with in these next three chapters. He doesn't just want to draw the boundaries and say you can do this, you can't do that. He wants to address this at the level of our motivations and our identity.

Say, who are you? Who do you belong to? You know, a lot of Christian answers to ethical questions only make sense if you start with, who are you? Who do you belong to?

You're a human being created in God's image or someone who's called to belong to Jesus Christ. A lot of Christian ethical answers only make sense in the context of the Christian worldview.

So that's what Paul's doing all along in 1 Corinthians. He's addressing all kinds of different issues by bringing them back to the message of Christ crucified and risen.

[9 : 40] Now before we jump into chapter 8, take out your bulletin and look at the insert. We're about halfway through 1 Corinthians, so I wanted to do a little bit of a big picture where we come from, where we're going.

And particularly, I just want to point out some patterns in 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians is not just sort of a random assortment of issues that Paul's dealing with one by one.

There's actually some patterns in how he addresses each issue in light of the gospel of Christ. And particularly, he begins by warning against divisions and pride in section 1, against sexual immorality and greed in section 2, which we just finished.

And here against idolatry and selfishness. All of those things destroy the church. But he follows the warnings with a positive vision of what it looks like, practically speaking, to build up the church to display the glory of God in this world.

In chapter 3, verse 16, Paul said, you are the temple of God. God's dwelling place on earth, the visible display of God's glory in this broken world.

[10 : 52] So he says, live in such a way as to build up that temple. That language of building up is very, you'll see a lot in the next half of 1 Corinthians, especially 12 through 14.

But building up on another. The image Paul has in mind that the church is God's temple, God's dwelling place where His presence and glory dwell in this world. And Paul says, build up that temple.

Don't tear it down. And don't hurt the parts of the building that are weak. Rather, come alongside them and strengthen them. chapter 8 through 10, there's a pattern.

Same as 12 through 14, he begins with some general principles, which we'll look at today. Chapter 8, he then seems to digress. He seems to address a different topic. Chapter 9 doesn't mention food offered to idols at all.

And Paul seems to go a totally different direction, but actually, that's the heart of Paul's message. And then he comes back to food offered to idols, chapter 10. It's the same thing, 12, 13, 14, with spiritual gifts and then love.

[11 : 59] Right? That chapter gets read at weddings all the time. It's not just about marriage, it's not primarily about marriage, it's about love for your brothers and sisters in the church. And why that's the key to understanding spiritual gifts.

The key to understanding spiritual gifts is understanding what it means to love as Christ has loved us. And the key to understanding food offered to idols is understanding what it means to be willing to lay down our rights and our freedoms and our privileges for the good of others.

Alright, so that's a little bit of where we're going. Let's dive in. Chapter 8, verse 1. Now concerning food offered to idols. If you look back at chapter 7, verse 1, Paul uses the same phrase.

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. So the Corinthians had written to Paul, we don't have a copy of their letter, but they had written a letter to Paul, probably asking his advice on certain matters.

Most likely, this was one of them. In verse 1 and verse 4, Paul seems to be quoting, perhaps from their letter, that they sent him. Now the ESV puts those things in quotes.

[13 : 08] All of us possess knowledge. An idol has no real existence. There is no God but one. So it seems like, if you look at the context of these chapters, it seems like here's what the Corinthians wrote to Paul.

Dear Paul, some members of our church have become upset because others have accepted invitations to dinners held in idol temples and freely eat food that has been offered to idols.

But all of us possess knowledge that an idol has no real existence and that there is no God but one. So there is no such thing as idol food, just food. But these weak people are frightened.

They think we are promoting idolatry. They question our right to eat whatever we want. We are trying to build them up so they too can enjoy freedom in Christ and eat any food.

That's probably something like what the Corinthians wrote to Paul. If you want to understand how I came up with that, I'm happy to explain more later. But this is, I think this will make sense of what we're reading in chapter 8.

[14 : 15] Now, what we'll see here is Paul doesn't immediately take sides. He doesn't immediately say, I agree with you, I disagree with you. He takes a step back and addresses some bigger picture issues.

And in this chapter in particular, he focuses on knowledge and love. He says, you know, you're saying you know all these things. Well, let's talk about knowledge.

And let's also talk about love. What does it mean to love one another in the body of Christ? So there are three paragraphs. In chapter 8, we'll take them in turn. Paragraph 1, verse 1 through 3, how knowledge relates to love.

Paragraph 2, verse 4 through 6, what we know as Christians. And paragraph 3, how Christians should love. Verse 7 through 13. So first, knowledge and love, how they relate together.

What Paul does in verse 1 through 3, is he points out the dangers of knowledge and the priority of love. He says, this knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

[15 : 21] If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. Now, we should rip that verse out of context. Paul is not against knowledge. Paul himself was very well educated.

Paul also wasn't a radical skeptic. he wasn't saying the only thing we can ever know is that we don't know anything. What Paul was saying is that there's an inherent danger in accumulating knowledge.

Particularly when that knowledge is limited or distorted. And he's concerned that some of the Corinthian Christians were falling into this trap. Their knowledge was puffing them up with pride and arrogance.

They were very confident in their knowledge, but they were using their knowledge as a weapon to defend themselves rather than as a tool to build up the community.

But they perhaps didn't even realize that they were doing this. I don't think they were out to, I don't think they were malicious people that Paul was writing to who were out to hurt the weak in their community.

[16 : 32] They were simply very confident in their knowledge, blind about some of their, the ways that they were affecting other people and not realizing the harm they were causing them. And so Paul's trying to help them.

And he's trying to help us get our priorities straight. So he wants to say true knowledge of God and of ourselves should express itself in love for God and love for Naaman.

Jesus said that's the first and greatest commandment. What we read from Deuteronomy, to love the Lord your God is all your heart and soul and mind and strength. The second is like it to love your neighbor as yourself.

Paul says knowledge pops up. It's like a balloon. You know, kids are always excited when they get balloons, aren't they? Right? But the balloon never lasts more than a few days.

It deflates. It shrivels up. It doesn't last in a church that's built on knowledge and pride but lacks love and humility.

[17 : 33] It's like balloon. It may look very impressive for a while and elevated and large but it can fall apart just as quickly. But Paul says love builds up.

Love creates something substantial and enduring and solid that can't be quickly blown away by the wind. When a Christian community is characterized by steadfast enduring love it can withstand all kinds of external pressures and stresses without falling apart.

That's why Proverbs says love covers over a multitude of sins. Love is very important. Now of course love for God and love for one another matures through growing knowledge.

Philippians 1 Paul prays it is my prayer that your love may abound in knowledge and with all discernment so that you may prove what is excellent and be pure and plainly. So Paul's not saying knowledge is unimportant.

He's saying our knowledge needs to be rooted in love and it needs to be expressed in love. Now verse 3 right if that's the main point of the paragraph we might expect Paul to say if anyone loves God that person is the one who truly knows God right because if you truly know God then you'll have love for God but interestingly Paul gives us a little surprise he says if anyone loves God he is known by God.

[19 : 06] What Paul wants to leave us with in this paragraph is the most important kind of knowledge is not any knowledge that you have it's that God knows you and when the Bible talks about God knowing us it doesn't just mean he knows about us just like he knows about everything else in the rest of the world and everything else there is to know when the Bible says God knows you that refers to him choosing us to be his own before the foundation of the world uniting himself to us intimately in covenant faithfulness through Christ when we're known by God it means we're loved by God it means we're wrapped in his embrace it means we respond by knowing and loving him in return it means we're drawn in to the Father Son and Holy Spirit in that community of love and knowledge now before we go on to the next section the next paragraph let me give a few brief applications about the dangers of knowledge and the priority of love first college students and this applies to high school and middle school students but you live in an environment that's oriented around increasing your technical knowledge and critical thinking skills and those skills can be very valuable and very worthwhile but beware the tendency of knowledge to puff you up with pride

I mean it's pretty easy if you go to Yale it's easy right it's pretty easy to look around and find somebody else that seems to be pumped up with all their knowledge but the false question is look at ourselves is that happening to us too and second we're supposed to pursue love with as much diligence and energy as you pursue knowledge and by love I don't mean romance necessarily by love I mean things like learning to listen well learning to be a good friend regardless of whether you're a good networker learning to relate to people who are very different than you or who seem to have nothing to offer you learning to speak the truth in love to people who have offended or wronged you learning to forgive as

God has forgiven you this is the kind of love that our world desperately needs resolve to pursue love and harness your knowledge toward the end of loving others more effectively it takes time to develop that kind of love it's not something that comes naturally to us Paul says it's a fruit of the Holy Spirit working in us so if your student resolves to pursue love with as much diligence and energy as you are pursuing knowledge second if you're in divinity school or thinking about going to seminary or divinity school one of the major spiritual dangers of enrolling full time especially in seminary or div school is that your knowledge about God and the Bible and theology and church history is almost always growing faster than your love for God and for your name and so many people don't realize this but seminary or div school can be as much of a spiritual battlefield as anywhere else in the world some people think it will be a spiritual paradise

I can just go and learn about the Bible for two or three years it's not just that because the dangers are more hidden if you're a div school student you need the broader body of Christ the local church not just the div school community and not just the div school chapel because being part of the larger body of Christ will constantly challenge you to love people who are different than you people who haven't read any of the books you're reading and might not really care about them it'll push you to consider how the material you're learning actually applies to people in their real daily lives it will humble you and you probably need that on a regular basis okay third group I've been in all these groups by the way okay third group if you're really into reform theology okay maybe you came to

Trinity because you found us on 9 March and the gospel coalition and you read our recommended book list on the website and you thought this is the church for me some of you are like I don't even know what any of those things are that's fine okay there's a danger of being pumped up with reform theology just as much as any other kind of college but think about what reform theology says it says this it says God doesn't owe you anything because he's sovereign over everything he chose you in Christ before the world began you had nothing to do with that and your salvation is by grace alone not by your good works not by your intellect and not because you have your theology all right so if you really understand that the harder performed theology you'll become increasingly humble and willing and even wanting to receive correction from others in the body of Christ whether or not they understand what performed theology is or call themselves performed or don't know or don't care and you will become increasingly grateful and generous and joyful and reverent that's the kind of love that understanding the biblical gospel produces and finally the knowledge we should treasure more than anything else as I said is the knowledge that God knows us that he has loved us and received us through Christ that he knows us better than we know ourselves and yet he loves us through and through he's called us by name you know there's an amazing promise in Revelation 2 17

[25 : 34] Jesus says to the one who overcomes that is the one who perseveres in faith I will give you a white stone with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it Jesus knows you better than you know yourself and one day in heaven he's going to give you a new name and apparently he's just going to be he knows you so intimately and personally and individually that no one will know that name except him and you and maybe you can share with everybody else because I guess we'll have a complete knowledge in heaven I don't know how that all works but the point is he knows your name and he has called you by name and he has a name that he's going to give you because he knows you so well and sees all that he's going to do in you that's an amazing promise alright so that's the first thing priority of love and the dangers of knowledge second thing what we should know as Christians this is verse 4 through 6 again Paul's not putting down knowledge that's why he talks about it in verse 4 through 6

Paul goes back to some of the Corinthian slogans an idol has no real existence there's no God but one this is a reference to what we read earlier in Deuteronomy it's called the Shema it's the confession of faith that the Jewish people have recited for centuries the Lord our God the Lord is one you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your might now some of the people in the Corinthian church were saying well idols aren't real it's only one through God so we can just go into pagan temples and eat meat offered to idols it doesn't really matter idols just aren't real we just know it's all a charade they might believe it's real but as long as you know it's fake then it doesn't matter well let's challenge that attitude because at one level there was a self-serving attitude the primary reason people would have been motivated to go into idol temples and eat food offered to idols is because that is where a lot of the more socially prominent

Corinthians often gathered for both religious rituals as well as social occasions and so if you got an invitation to dine at the temple of Asclepion there was a potential social cost to refusing it or to showing up and abstaining from some of the foods that the host provided and so Paul has a challenge their attitude and sort of their desire for social advancement at all costs but Paul does this first by saying remember what we know as Christians again Paul's stepping back he doesn't just say yes no he doesn't just get right in their face right away but he steps back and says think about knowledge and think about love and then think about what we know as Christians verse 6 for us there is one God the Father from whom are all things and for whom we exist and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and through whom we live now notice what

Paul points out Paul points out three things in that simple verse three things beyond there is no God beyond a simple affirmation of monotheistic faith so first he points out we exist for God one God for whom we exist in other words you don't exist for yourselves God is not only the origin of everything he's also the purpose and end for which we were created and as Paul will get into this later on one of the major problems is that some of the Corinthian Christians were being selfish and self-promoting and they were acting as if God exists so that we can do what we want and Paul says oh no we exist for God that's a fundamental truth from him and for him we have to start there second we come to God the Father through Jesus Christ it says through whom are all things and through who we exist now that last phrase is literally it says the ESV translated through who we exist which is very legitimate translation but it literally just says we through him it says from whom are all things and we for him and then one more

Jesus Christ through whom are all things and we through him so I think the end of the verse is not just saying we exist because of Jesus Christ but it's saying that it's through Jesus Christ that we achieve the end for which we were created it's through Jesus Christ that we realize our purpose and destiny as human beings and it's through Jesus in particular who came and died on the cross that we're reconciled to God we can know God as our Father again Paul just mentions these theological truths here but these are the truths that he's going to really dig into because even later in this chapter he's going to say your brother is the one for whom Christ died it is through the sacrificial death of Christ that you and your brother and your sister can come freely before God so again Paul's sort of laying the groundwork for what he's going to dig into deeper later on third thing Paul says Jesus Christ is Lord and God now this is a side note but if you take a New Testament class at a secular university or if you watch a PBS special on early Christianity you may hear people say the earliest followers of Jesus did not actually worship him or proclaim his divinity this belief developed gradually and later on just like the larger than life legends that develop around great historical figures long after they're gone the problem with that view well this verse among many other things creates a problem for that view because 1 Corinthians is one of the earliest pieces of Christian literature that we have written only 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection and when Paul says

[31 : 49] Jesus Christ is not only the Messiah but also the one Lord Paul's identifying Jesus with the one God that Jews had worshipped for centuries it's a strong statement of the deity of Jesus Christ and Paul states this as if everyone knows this this is one of the few statements in 1 Corinthians that it's not at all controversial the Corinthians got this right Jesus Christ is God they knew it Paul agreed with them he didn't have to convince them there's all kinds of other things he was trying to convince them of but this was already established it's even possible that Paul was quoting an early Christian pre an early Christian summary of the faith confession of faith that was based on the Jewish confession of faith in Deuteronomy but expanded to explain that we not only believe in one God but we believe in the one Lord Jesus Christ our Savior so it's simply not the case that the deity of Jesus Christ is a belief that appears more prominently in later

Christian writings it's right there from the start and it's crystal clear and for Paul and the Corinthians that wasn't even controversial so that's what Christians should know third section of how we're called to love verse 7 to 13 now the main point of this paragraph is verse 9 and the reason I can say it's the main point is because it's the only command in this passage and actually in the whole chapter verse 9 is really the message the takeaway that Paul wants us to go away with take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block through to the week for the week so in this paragraph Paul's addressing the people who claim to possess knowledge and who claim that because they have this knowledge we should all feel free to eat any food we want anytime we want and who are sort of probably complaining to

Paul saying these weak people who still think that isles are real are preventing us from living out our freedom in Christ and Paul says wait a minute he says consider how the display of your knowledge and Paul is using knowledge a bit ironically in this whole chapter but anyway he says consider how the display of your knowledge will affect your brothers and sisters in Christ those whom you consider weak verse 8 he says food won't commend us to God well they would have agreed with him so yeah food doesn't matter that's not how you're made right with God so therefore we should be able to eat anything we want whatever we want and Paul says but we're no worse off if we don't eat and no better off if we do he actually says the opposite of what they want they want him to say we're no worse off if we eat and no better off if we don't

Paul says if you don't eat the food you'll be just fine with the end and if you do eat it doesn't get you any closer to God you already have everything you need in Christ Christ died for you to bring you to God so you're not only free to partake you're also free to abstain you see having freedom in Christ to eat all foods as long as they're received with thanksgiving which at one level Paul doesn't agree with doesn't mean you are compelled to eat all foods to prove how free you are Paul doesn't want them eating food in the context of a pagan idolatrous feast because he doesn't want them promoting idolatry we'll look up to that chapter 10 jumping ahead Paul's saying to have freedom doesn't mean you have to indulge you can have freedom to drink alcohol in moderation and you can choose for various reasons that you don't want to do that and you're still free in Christ that's one expression of freedom in

Christ so in this circumstance Paul argues you need to prioritize love for your weak brothers and sisters in Christ over your own rights to eat and drink whatever you want whenever you want so he says take care you know think about what if one of your brothers or sisters in Christ used to worship at the temple of Aphrodite and they hear that you're going to the festival there and you're going to pick out and you're just going to have a great time and that's where they used to worship idols and commit sexual immorality do all kinds of things that they're just trying to move away from because they've just come to faith in Christ how will that affect them if you're publicly going and saying hey why don't we get a roof from the church to go along Paul says their conscience will be defiled that is they'll be persuaded to do something that they are convinced is a compromise of their loyalty to

[37 : 32] Jesus and Paul says that's never a good pattern to be urging a fellow believer to do something that they are convinced for biblical reasons is displeasing to God now there are other places in scripture especially Romans 14 where Paul sometimes challenges some of the weak people right who are Paul's concerned some of these weak people are becoming actually legalistic and sort of wanting to add all these rules and enforce them on everybody else in the Christian community and in that case Paul says no you can't do that you can't add rules that aren't in the Bible but here Paul's focus is on the quote unquote strong people who think hey we can do whatever we want Paul challenges them here verse 11 Paul has some very strong words by your knowledge which you boast about so much this weak person is being destroyed that is not just personally offended but spiritually torn apart led into sin by you and this weak person is the brother or sister for whom Christ died

Christ laid down his life for him and you're not even willing to give up a meal for his or her good verse 12 Paul says you're not only sinning against your brothers or sisters you're sinning against Christ because Christ said whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters you've done it to me and Jesus said whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me that is a vulnerable believer to sin it would be better for that person to have a great stone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea Matthew 18 verse 6 and 7 so Paul's conclusion in verse 13 is if food makes my brother or sister stumble I'll never eat meat again hey I'm willing to give it all up so I'm willing to do whatever it takes to love and build up my brothers and sisters in

Christ especially those who are weak or vulnerable in some way or other in the Corinthian context the people who are strong are the people who are probably better off economically that's why they're receiving invitations to the temples anyway the poor didn't get invited to those kind of feasts they were people who possessed knowledge perhaps were more sophisticated more nuanced who were self confident probably too self confident the weak were probably people who were financially poor not as well educated not as sophisticated maybe new converts to Christianity who had just begun following Jesus and Paul says if you're in this category be careful that the exercise of what you feel are your rights and freedoms doesn't actually cause this group of people to stumble or to turn away from God are we willing to prioritize loving our weaker brothers and sisters in

Christ even if it means limiting our rights and privileges this is the theme Paul's going to go into in chapter 9 he's going to address it from a totally different angle but it's the main point so we'll get into this more in the next two weeks but that's the main point Paul wants to leave us with are we willing to limit our own freedoms and rights for the sake of loving our brothers and sisters and the reason he wants to leave us with this is of course because this is what Christ has done for us that Christ limited his freedoms and rights by coming to earth by taking on the limitations of human nature by facing temptation and resisting it to the end by loving his disciples by laying down his life on the cross this is what Christ has done for us this is why we're brothers and sisters in Christ this is why we can come to the table and share in the Lord's supper together because while we were still weak

Christ died for the ungodly while we were still sinners Christ died for us Paul says now we're all part of the body of Christ and later on in chapter 12 he says those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are actually indispensable so if you're hurting your brothers or sisters or ignoring your brothers or sisters who are poor or who are maybe more easily offended perhaps more difficult to deal with even if you're brushing them to the side you're hurting them by the way you express your knowledge Paul says you're hurting a member of Christ's own body who is indispensable so we're going to come to the Lord's table this morning celebrate the unity that we have in Christ sacrifice Christ made for us let me read chapter 10 verse 16 and 17

[43 : 05] Paul says the cup of blessing that we bless is it not a participation in the blood of Christ and the bread that we break is it not a participation in the body of Christ Christ because there's one bread we who are many are one body for we all partake of one bread so as we come to the Lord's supper there's two things I want to remind us of as we take the cup remember Christ's blood that was shed for us we confess that the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross cleanses us from all sin and this blood the cup is a sign and a seal of God's new covenant promise in Jesus Christ if you have confessed your sin turned to Jesus as your Savior and Lord that you are clean you are forgiven you are set apart to belong to God you've been born again right cry out with love and joy the blood of

Christ cleanses us from sin Paul also says we are made in the body of Christ represented by the bread and in this context what Paul means is that when you take this bread remember that you are united with every other person in this room and every other Christian throughout the world who takes this bread by faith in Jesus Christ and who drinks this cup so as we come to the Lord's table there's two things that it calls us to do one is to remember that we are cleansed and forgiven by the blood of Christ and so if there is a sin that God has brought to mind that you realize you need to confess to the Lord in your life there's a way you've been living that isn't pleasing to God confess that to the Lord ask his forgiveness as the elements are being passed out and then take the cup remembering Christ shed his blood for you and as the bread is being passed out think about one another is there anyone in this church or any other Christian with whom you are not reconciled because when you eat this bread what you're saying is we are reconciled to each other through Christ so if you need to repent if you need to forgive someone else if you need to lovingly confront someone else if you need to listen to someone else let this spur you on to do that without any delay with those who are coming to serve communion this morning up to the front

Paul writes for I received from the Lord what I also deliver to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me Tyler would you give thanks for the bread of me I have that I have that I have that went back to the end in remembrance of me achieve that I am not by in remembrance of me as fala of me

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