

Approximately Expository 35 minutes



“Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Builds Up”

1 Corinthians Chapter 8

Opening Prayer:

Father God, we come before You in the mighty name of Jesus. Thank You for Your Word ... truth that shapes our minds and transforms our hearts. Holy Spirit, teach us today. Guard us from pride. Fill us with love. Help us understand how to walk in freedom without wounding others. And Lord, if anyone listening does not yet know You, draw them to salvation. We surrender this time to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Historical Setting:

In Corinth, pagan temples were everywhere. Animals were sacrificed to idols, and much of the meat sold in the marketplace had first been offered to those idols. Social gatherings and business meetings were often held in temple dining halls.

When someone became a Christian, they faced a practical question:

“Can I eat meat that was offered to idols?”

Some believers said, **“Idols are nothing. We know there’s only one God. So it doesn’t matter.”**

Others, especially newer believers who had come out of idol worship, felt deeply troubled by the idea.

The issue wasn't really about meat.
It was about freedom, conscience,
knowledge, and love.

1. Knowledge vs. Love:

  (NIV) ***1 Corinthians 8:1-3 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.² Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know.³ But whoever loves God is known by God.¹***

Paul begins in verse one:

  (NIV) ***“...We know that ‘We all possess knowledge.’ But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.”*** (v.1)

Knowledge by itself can inflate pride.

¹ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Co 8:1–3.

You can **know truth** and still **lack love**.
You can be doctrinally correct and
relationally destructive.

Verse 2:

  (NIV) **“Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know.”** (v.2)

True spiritual maturity produces **humility**.

Verse 3:

  (NIV) **“But whoever loves God is known by God.”** (v.3)

Being known by God matters more than
winning arguments.

Believers, this is foundational.

Christian maturity is not just knowing
Scripture.
It is applying it in love.

2. Theological Truth: There Is Only One God:



(NIV)

1 Corinthians 8:4-6 ⁴ So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” ⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), ⁶ yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. ²

Paul affirms the truth:

² [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Co 8:4–6.



(NIV)

“...We know that ‘An idol is nothing at all in the world’ and that ‘There is no God but one.’” (v.4)

The meat itself was not spiritually contaminated.

Verse 6 is powerful:



(NIV)

“Yet for us there is but one God, the Father... and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” (v.6)

This verse clearly teaches that there is only one true God, and that Jesus Christ is Lord. The strong believers understood that idols had no real power and that food offered to idols did not make them spiritually unclean.

So in their theology, they were right.

But Paul is teaching that being right is not enough if we use that truth without love. A believer can know the right doctrine and still

hurt another believer by acting carelessly. Truth must never be used with pride. Truth must be guided by love, patience, and concern for the spiritual condition of others.

3. The Weak Conscience:



(NIV)

1 Corinthians 8:7-9 ⁷ But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. ⁸ But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

⁹ Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.³

³ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Co 8:7–9.

Paul says in verse 7:

  (NIV) **“But not everyone possesses this knowledge.”** (v.7)

Some believers had tender consciences.

For them, eating idol meat felt like returning to their old life.

Verse 9:

  (NIV) **“Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”** (v.9)

This is where Christian freedom must be guided by Christian love.

Yes, there may be things we are allowed to do as believers. But before we do them, we should ask some deeper questions:

Will this help someone grow closer to Christ?

Will this encourage another believer?

Could this confuse or hurt someone who is still growing in their faith?

Christian freedom is not just about saying, “I have the right to do this.” It is about asking, “How will this affect my brother or sister in Christ?”

For example, a mature believer may feel free to watch a certain movie, listen to certain music, or go to a certain place because it does not trouble their conscience. But a newer believer, who has just come out of a sinful lifestyle, may see that and be pulled back toward old habits or old temptations.

In that moment, love says, “Even if I have the freedom, I will not use my freedom in a way that causes someone else to stumble.”

Christian liberty is real, but it is never selfish. True Christian freedom is controlled

by love. It thinks about others. It protects others. It builds others up in Christ.

4. The Danger of Causing Someone to Stumble:



(NIV)

1 Corinthians 8:10-12 ¹⁰ For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. ¹² When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.⁴

Paul warns:



(NIV)

“...If someone with a weak conscience sees you... won't that

⁴ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Co 8:10–12.

person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols?” (v.10)

If your example leads them into confusion or sin, you have harmed them.

Verse 11 is sobering:

  (NIV) **“So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge.”** (v.11)

Notice that phrase ...   (NIV) **“...for whom Christ died...”** (v.11)

If Jesus valued them enough to die for them, we should value them enough to limit our freedom.

Verse 12:

  (NIV) **“When you sin against them in this way... you sin against Christ.”** (v.12)

How we treat fellow believers reflects how we treat Christ.

That is a powerful truth.

Paul says that when we wound the conscience of a brother or sister in Christ, we are not just hurting another person. We are sinning against Christ Himself.

  Why?

   Because that believer belongs to Jesus.

That person may be young in the faith. They may still be learning. They may still be growing. They may still be weak in certain areas. But Christ died for them. Jesus shed His blood for them. The Holy Spirit lives in them. They are part of the body of Christ.

So the way we speak to them matters.

The way we treat them matters.

The way we use our freedom around them matters.

In America today, we live in a culture that often says, “I can do what I want.” People say, “It’s my life. It’s my choice. I have my rights.” And in many areas, that may be true. But the Christian life is not built on selfishness. The Christian life is built on love.

For example, a believer may say, “I have the freedom to post whatever I want on social media.” But what if that post is harsh, prideful, mocking, or spiritually confusing to a younger believer? What if it causes someone to stumble, become discouraged, or think that Christians are no different from the world?

Another example may be entertainment. A mature believer may say, “This movie, this music, or this event does not bother me.” But what if another believer has just been delivered from a lifestyle connected to those things? What if seeing your freedom pulls them back toward old temptations?

Or think about alcohol. Some Christians may feel they have liberty in this area. But what if a brother or sister has just come out of addiction? What if your freedom becomes their struggle? What if your example gives them permission to walk back into bondage?

Love asks a deeper question.

Not just, “Can I do this?”

But, **“Will this help my brother or sister walk closer to Jesus?”**

Not just, “Do I have the right?”

But, “Will this build up the body of Christ?”

Not just, “Does this bother me?”

But, “Could this wound someone Christ died for?”

That is the heart of Paul’s warning.

Christian maturity is not proving how free we are. Christian maturity is being willing to limit our freedom for the good of someone else.

If Jesus loved that person enough to die for them, then we should love them enough to be careful with our words, our actions, our attitudes, and our example.

When we protect a weaker believer, we honor Christ.

When we encourage a struggling believer, we serve Christ.

When we refuse to use our freedom in a selfish way, we reflect Christ.

Because in the body of Christ, people are not problems to ignore. They are souls Jesus purchased with His own blood.

So let us walk carefully.

Let us speak carefully.

Let us live lovingly.

Because how we treat fellow believers reflects how we treat Christ.

5. Love Limits Liberty:

  (NIV) ***1 Corinthians 8:13¹³ Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.⁵***

Paul concludes:

  (NIV) ***“Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again...”*** (v.13)

That is radical love.

Paul was willing to surrender his rights for the sake of someone else's spiritual health.

⁵ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Co 8:13.

This is Christlike.

Jesus had every right ... yet He laid it down.

He humbled Himself.

He died for us.

Application for Today:

We may not struggle with idol meat ... but we face similar questions:

- . Entertainment choices
- . Social behaviors
- . Cultural freedoms
- . Personal preferences

The question is not just:

“Is it allowed?”

The question is:

“Does it build up?”

“Does it glorify God?”

“Does it protect my brother or sister?”

Freedom in Christ is real.
But it is governed by love.

Knowledge asks:
“What can I do?”

Love asks:
“What should I do for others?”

The Heart Issue: Pride or Love?:

Chapter 8 exposes the heart.

Do we want to:

- . Win arguments?
- . Prove we're right?
- . Flaunt freedom?

Or do we want to:

- . Protect weaker believers?
- . Build up the church?
- . Reflect Jesus?

Spiritual maturity sacrifices preference for people.

Invitation to Be Born Again:

Perhaps someone listening realizes something deeper.

Maybe you've lived by knowledge ...
But not by love.

Maybe you know about God ...
But you do not know Him.

Verse 3 says:

  (NIV) **“Whoever loves God is known by God.”** (v.3)

Are you known by God?

Christianity is not about mastering information.

It is about surrendering to Jesus.

The truth is:

There is one God.

There is one Lord, Jesus Christ.

He died for sinners.

He rose again.

He offers forgiveness and eternal life.

You may have knowledge of religion ...

But have you been born again?

To be born again means:

- . Admit your sin.
- . Turn from it.
- . Trust in Jesus Christ alone
- . Receive His forgiveness and new life.

If you are ready, pray in your heart:

 Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, I confess that I have sinned.... I believe You died for me and rose again.... I surrender my life to You.... Forgive me.... Change me.... Fill me with Your love.... Amen.

If you mean that, He will save you.
He will fill you with His Spirit.
And He will begin transforming knowledge
into love.



Let us pray.

Closing Prayer:

**Father God, thank You for truth. Thank
You for freedom. But most of all, thank
You for love. Guard us from pride that
puffs up. Teach us to build others up.
Help us surrender our rights when
necessary for the sake of someone
weaker.**

**Fill us with the love of Christ ... love that
sacrifices, love that protects, love that
reflects the cross.**

**For those who have surrendered to You
today, fill them with Your Spirit.
Establish them in grace and truth.**

May our lives declare that love builds up.

**We love You. We praise You.
In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.**



Knowledge alone cannot change a heart ... but the love of Jesus can.

MP3:

At **OpenDoorLakeCC.org**, we teach God's Word with clarity and compassion, helping believers grow in truth while walking in love. If you are ready to deepen your understanding, strengthen your faith, and live a life that builds others up instead of tearing them down, the door is open. Come discover the freedom that flows from knowing Christ and loving like He loves.

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