

1 Cor 8:1-13 Bible Study

NB “food sacrificed to idols” –most meat was offered in sacrifices to pagan gods, the food then eaten within the temple in worship of those gods (Sizzlers of the ancient world!) and leftover sold in the marketplace).

1. Read 8:1-3. Is Paul an enemy of Christians having “knowledge”? If not, what is he against?

Paul is against knowledge that is not informed by faith or guided by love. Such knowledge is not going to be the determining factor in any issue for God’s people (eg food offered to idols)

2. Are there examples you can think of where you have seen knowledge “puffing up” Christians? Are there examples of yourself? What was the result?

3. Read 8:4-6. Summarise the ‘knowledge’ that Paul says we all have here.

- *Idols are nothing, despite many “gods” and many “lords”*
- *There is only one God*
 - *The Father: source and purpose of life*
- *There is only one Lord*
 - *Jesus: agent of creation and sustainer of life*

4. What might be the result of a Christian having this knowledge?

Be able to eat food that has come out of a temple, not worried about any defilement because it is ‘just food’.

5. Read 8:7-8. Does Paul mean that some Christians don’t know that there is only one God and Lord?

No. They are “accustomed” to certain things (in their pre-Christian days) and their “conscience” is still weak. Maybe we would describe it in terms of “feelings” – they ‘feel’ defiled, but would say they weren’t.

6. Why does Paul add verse 8? What might be behind this statement?

Maybe the Corinthians were demanding that they should be able to eat the food offered to idols because they know idols are nothing. For them there are no other considerations to make. And freedom like this must be exercised, or it’s not really freedom! But this is not a matter of faith, exercising our freedom or not will not impact our relationship with God.

7. Read 8:9-13. It seems the Corinthians have been eating food sacrificed to idols. What was the problem?

Not everyone’s consciences were clear on this issue. And the others knew this (hence raising it in their letter to Paul) – but perhaps just looked down on them, or just told them that it’s all OK, but refused to ‘forego’ the exercise of their freedom.

8. Why is “knowledge” not enough on it’s own to guide Christians?

We do not live in a vacuum, and all true knowledge of God is personal, since God is a Person. Christ did not die for ideas and ‘freedom’ but for people cf v.11, all knowledge needs to be tempered by this reality

9. [If there is time, read Mark 7:17-23 & Rom 14:1-23. How do these passages help your understanding of the issues in 1 Cor 8?]

10. How might this ‘weaker brother/sister’ principle be used in our lives? Can you think of any practical examples? How easy do you find it to consider the faith and conscience of others? Is this an area you need to ask for God’s help in?

Read 8:9-13. It seems the Corinthians have been eating food sacrificed to idols. What was the problem?