

1 Corinthians 8

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[0 : 00] 1 Corinthians chapter 8. As we just continue to make our way through the book of 1 Corinthians, we are now into the 8th chapter.

We will see the chapter in its entirety. If you have not been with us on previous Sundays and you're new here this morning, we're just making our way through this short book in the New Testament, the book of 1 Corinthians, and seeing what God has on His heart and on His mind leading Paul to author a letter to the church at Corinth as he is writing to them about some very important things. If you remember, the very first part of the book kind of deals with some personal matters as he's calling them to attention. He's calling them to faithfulness. And then as he moves into the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and moving on from there, he is answering questions that they had asked of him. So we are kind of in that position. So let's stand. If you are physically able and desire to do something, I ask if you would join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found in the 8th chapter of 1 Corinthians, just 13 verses.

We'll read them in their entirety and then we will pray. Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

[1 : 22] If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by him. Therefore, concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world and that there is no God but one.

For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father from whom are all things and we exist for him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we exist through him.

However, not all men have this knowledge, but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

But food will not commend us to God. We are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat, but take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

For if someone sees you who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge, he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.

[2 : 44] And so by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your faithfulness. We thank you for the opportunity we have together, together. We thank you for your word.

And Lord, as we come to this time where we ask and we trust that you will speak to us through it, God, we pray that by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit that you would speak to every heart, every mind, and every being.

Lord, we pray that it would not be the thoughts or the opinions of man, but it would be the very word of God that would penetrate to the very depth of our being. Mold and shape and conform us to your image and your glory.

And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. As the children were singing and dancing to that last song, faith is the victory.

[3 : 49] His banner over me is love. Jehovah Nissi, right? The Lord our banner. Banners were flew in the midst of battle so that you would know a place of gathering together, a place of camaraderie ship, and to know who you were fighting under.

If you had a banner, you knew where to gather together. Jehovah Nissi, the Lord is our banner. One of the names of God that we find in the Old Testament.

When you read the works of the early church and you see the movement of the early church, you understand that the early church really went forward in victory in faith, fighting, as some would describe it, in an almost militaristic sense and order.

Not physically, but spiritually pushing back darkness. That they had faith in what they believed. They understood the gospel. They were committed to it.

They knew the banner that they belonged to. And they dictated every aspect of their lives accordingly. Therefore, a few number of people, 11 really is what was commissioned by Christ, turned the world upside down in just a few years.

[5 : 01] Because they moved forward intentionally. They moved forward being separated. And they moved forward purposefully. When Paul is writing to the church at Corinth, the church is still very new and very young.

Not just the church at Corinth, but the church in general. And the church is still trying to define itself and to see how it should live in the world in which it has been placed. That's still a question the church must ask today.

How should we live in the midst of the culture in which we have been placed? We are blessed to be sitting in a building that was constructed in 1888. And there was February 2nd, 1888, was the coronation service of the church here at Wartrace Baptist.

There was a train involved that day as well because they had to bring an extra train from Shelbyville to bring people in so that everyone that wanted to come see the new building could come in attendance. And I promise you, they didn't have a problem waiting on the train that day.

Because the culture of 1888 was a lot different than the culture today. And the question the church had to ask itself then was, how do we function best in the society, in the culture we have been placed in?

[6 : 16] And it is not enough to have asked it in 1888. We must still ask it today. Because the church at Wartrace is not the building in which we occupy when we gather.

The church is the people. And we understand that. So in the church at Corinth is asking Paul questions, and they're asking him questions that have direct application to their society, to their culture, and to their time.

They have asked questions about marriage. If I am married and I come to Christ and my spouse does not accept Christ, should I stay married or should I get divorced? Paul says, remain married. They've asked if they're single, should I get married?

Paul says, good either way. Right? He gave that answer. Should I be married or should I stay single? And Paul says, yes. The answer is yes to both of those. Gives a very general answer because he's pushing to a relationship of Christ more than the rules and orders to follow.

When we turn to the eighth chapter, we get to the third question that they're asking. Now concerning things, sacrifice to idols. Now concerning things, sacrifice to idols.

[7 : 33] Paul will answer this question in chapter 8. He will illustrate the question in chapter 9. He will return to the question in chapter 10, and he will finish the answer in chapter 11, verse 1.

And then he finishes the answer with this, Therefore be imitators as me, as I also imitate Christ. Now I'll go ahead and spoil it for you.

The overall answer to the question concerning things, sacrifice to idols. Don't eat it. Now that's real easy. Because Paul really didn't have to spend so long answering that question.

But let me set the scene for you just a little bit. Because if you ever take the Bible out of context, we don't really understand it. The city of Corinth was a very populated city.

The city of Corinth was a very prosperous city. The city of Corinth was a metropolitan city, which was occupied by various people from all regions of the Roman Empire.

[8 : 33] Now Rome had no problem with your faith. As a matter of fact, Rome loved all faiths. You just add it to the plethora of other gods, lowercase g, which were already there.

As long as Caesar was your main god, he didn't care which other gods you added to it. And Corinth was a direct reflection of that. Because Corinth was a home to a number of idolatrous temples.

Now in these temples, because idolatry is always a copying of the truth. And if you, now stay with me, I'm going somewhere here. If you open up the Old Testament, you'll see that God dictated and mandated sacrificial animals.

Because without the shedding of blood, no man is forgiven. Now we don't have that in New Testament because the blood's already been shed. It is the blood of the lamb slain before the

foundation of the world, who is Jesus Christ. But in the Old Testament practice, in Jewish thought, in Judaism, there was the sacrificial animals.

Idol temples had the same thing. Quite often, the only thing they were concerned about was blood. All they wanted was the blood to fulfill their necessary sacrifice.

[9 : 47] And they would have the animals, at least the meat, left over. Now if you were going in Corinth and you decided you wanted to eat meat, now Paul is writing to the church at Corinth, which is Gentile.

So the kosher food laws don't matter. That means they can eat all the bacon they want. They can eat all the pork they want. They can eat all the meat they want. Kosher laws don't matter. This is a Gentile church. And if you want to go get something to put on the grill, or something to eat in Corinth, you had two options.

It wasn't Kroger and Publix. You had the meat market or the idolatrous temple. Now the meat market, you paid market price. At the temple, meat was a little bit cheaper.

Why? Because they had cut it up, laid it on an altar, pulled it off the altar, and had it hanging. They didn't need the meat. It was the byproduct of the sacrifice, so the meat was cheaper.

[10 : 43] So the automatic answer is, is it wrong for me to eat the meat that has already been offered to an idol because I can get it at a better price?

You see how this, now it begins to have daily application. Is it wrong for me to go there? And not only that, if someone invited you to a gathering, if you were working in a trade in the city of Corinth, and your work was hosting a meal, and you had to go to a luncheon or a training, quite often those gatherings were held in the idol temples because those were the only locations with a room big enough to gather in.

So the meat was cheaper and the room was accessible. And so the church is having to wrestle with this question, is it wrong for me to eat that meat? Now, Paul could have very easily, and I'll show you in just a moment, answered the question.

But as is what is true with most of Scripture, what we ask isn't really what we ask. Because all we're wanting are rules and regulations.

The real question we're asking is, how set apart must I be from society? What we're dealing with here is a terminology called sanctification, to be sanctified.

[12 : 17] To be sanctified is to be set apart. We've talked about it, right? It's not irreverent. It's not idolatrous to say that our offering plates are a sanctified object within the church.

We give the illustration, if we have a fellowship meal, we don't want you taking one of these nice offering plates and going back there and fixing your plates. We have other plates you can put your food on because these are set apart for the offering.

They're sanctified. They have a purpose. The moment you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, there's some wonderful things that happen. You are redeemed. You are pardoned.

You are saved beyond a shadow of a doubt. I believe in instantaneous salvation. You will never be more saved than you were saved at that moment. If at this moment you decide you need Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you don't need to go through any grand gestures.

The Bible says, whoever believes on him shall be saved. At that moment, you are fully saved. But you are not yet what you should be. I believe in instantaneous salvation and progressive sanctification.

[13 : 37] That is, you are saved in an instant. You are sanctified over a lifetime. He is setting you apart more and more and more and more and more. This is where we have to be careful that if we are still doing the things we used to do, if we accepted Christ 10 years ago and our life today doesn't look any different than it did 10 years ago, then where is the progression?

Everywhere I read in Scripture, anyone who walks with the Lord any number of days, they begin to be sanctified, set apart more and more and more because he calls us for his purposes.

We'll get to that in just a moment. So the question is, how do we live or how are we motivated to live sanctified lives? And am I free to live however I want to?

You say, well, I'm not offering meat to idols. Some of you in your mind say, well, I wish there was a temple I could get cheaper meat at. The question's not about meat. The question is, can I live however I want to after accepting Jesus Christ?

Or what motivation should I have for sanctified living? Because if I told you, you need to set your life apart more and more and more and it was a, here, do this, this, this, and this.

[14:57] After a little bit of time, those rules are going to get tiresome. The mold will get tiresome and you'll give up on it. But if we can find motivation for it, then things change.

And this is what Paul is answering in 8, 9, 10, in verse 1 of chapter 11. Motivation for sanctified living. The first motivation he gives us is a concern for others.

We should be motivated to live sanctified lives as a direct result of concern for other people, especially people in the church.

He says, now concerning things sacrificed to idols. If you have a Bible that has a side column reference or a center column reference or any kind of references, I would encourage you to read those cross references and really get into the word.

But when you read this, now concerning things, sacrificed to idols, there is one chapter that you could go to that could answer this in an instant. Now I know I'm getting very technical, but stay with me because if I don't give you the truth, then you'll think I'm just giving you rules.

[16:11] And I'm not giving you rules, I want to impart to you some motivation, right? If you turn to Acts chapter 15, don't do it. If you were to turn to Acts chapter 15, Acts chapter 15 is a very instrumental chapter in the book of Acts.

Acts chapter 15 is preceded by the first missionary journey of Paul. Paul has been commissioned by the church along with Barnabas and they have went into the Gentile territory and the gospel is taking root all over the Roman world.

The gospel is moving out of the Jewish circles. Now the center of the church is in Antioch. Antioch is not a Jewish city, it's a Gentile city. Antioch commissions, they pray over, in Acts 13, 14, they pray over Paul and Barnabas and Silas and they send them out when Silas comes later.

They send them out and they go on this missionary journey and they're preaching the gospel all over. And then they come back in Acts 14 and they report back to the church. And in Acts 15, if you're reading church history, Acts 15 is of utmost importance.

because Acts 15 answers the question, does everyone who comes to Christ have to become Jewish or is that something totally different?

[17:23] Do they have to be circumcised? Do they have to convert to Judaism or is Christianity and Judaism different? Is it legalistic or is it relational? Now I say all of that because the very first thing that the church fathers, and by church fathers I mean the apostles, right?

The apostles and the church fathers, James, the brother of Christ, all those that were gathered together in Jerusalem, the very first, they put three stipulations upon the church. Three stipulations. And the very first stipulation they said in Acts 15 is to abstain from food, sacrifice to idols. I say this because the church at Corinth is planted after that.

So the standard has already been set. Acts 16 and 17 you find Paul in Corinth planting a church. So the church has already made the rule.

Three things. The first thing that the church needs to do is do not eat meat, sacrifice to idols. So I'm saying this because Paul could have said now concerning meat, sacrifice to idols, don't eat it.

[18:36] And he could have left it at that. So if it's a matter of rules we could have already answered it. Well, rules don't motivate us.

Rules bind us. And when you come to Christ it's not about binding, it's about freeing him because he who has Christ is free indeed. And we see this here because he doesn't answer with the rule but he answers with the motivation and the first thing we see is a humble recognition.

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant but love edifies. For the second time the church at Corinth is using their knowledge.

They're using their knowledge as an excuse for liberty and freedom. They had used their knowledge in the earlier chapters that since I am free in Christ I can live however I want to and what does it matter what I do with my sexuality and my immorality and I am free because Christ has paid for my sins and I am free to live how I want to.

Who are you to judge me? And then Paul says but you are not your own. You have been bought with a price. And now they're saying well since I know there is no idol then surely I am free to eat the cheaper meat because I've been set free from that.

[19:56] I have this knowledge and Paul humbles them because he says but knowledge makes arrogant but love edifies. The question is not how much do we know but how much do we love because look at what he says.

If anyone supposes that he knows anything he has not yet known what he ought to know. Man that is something that ought to be underlined circled highlighted however you want to do it and it shows us that man in his limited fallible ability barely touches the tip of the iceberg of true knowledge. Every time I think I know anything God always opens it up and shows me what I do not know. Hey tonight we're preaching 1st Samuel 1st Samuel 28 I've had to change one of my biblical interpretations this last two weeks on how I used to interpret 1st Samuel 28 and I praise God because I thought I knew the passage and he's like ah you thought you did but you really don't and it's not a major it's not like a big stone but it's big in my life because I thought I knew that I didn't. Every time we're in the word right every time we understand this knowledge makes us proud but when we understand in light of what God knows we know nothing but if anyone loves God he is known by him.

So here's the grand question. The grand question is not how much do you know of scripture that gives you freedom to do whatever it is you want to do. The greater thing is not that you know a lot the greater thing is that you are known by God.

[21 : 44] this is why it's so amazing and we have no place for pride in faith we have no place for pride in Christianity is because it is far greater to realize that you are known by the Lord God Almighty than it is to consume a wealth of knowledge in your own mind.

The very new believer in faith the one who has come to Christ just a second ago is as much known by God as I am and it's far greater to be known by the maker than to know much about the maker. That doesn't mean we shouldn't seek to know but the greatest thing is the fact that we are known that he knows us. What an amazing truth it is.

David writes in one of his hymns that God is intimately aware of all of our ways known by the maker. That he knows all about us.

Let that truth set in for just a moment. God is intimately aware of all of our ways. I would dare say no one else in the room save your spouse is very aware of all your ways.

[23 : 04] But intimately aware of all your ways means that he knows why you do, how you do, what you think about when you do everything. But then he finishes that same psalm.

I don't know about you, when I read that I'm almost shudder at that. That God intimately knows everything about me. But in that same psalm David finishes by saying how glorious are your thoughts towards me.

The fact that the God who knows us better than anyone else, we are known by him, thinks wonderfully towards us. How amazing.

If you don't know anything else of the gospel, that's all you need to know. That while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He knows us. We're known by him.

And he sent the son to die for us. How humbling. There is a humble recognition. The second thing we see is an honest evaluation.

[24 : 09] This honest evaluation says, therefore, concerning things, concerning the eating of things, sacrifice idols. Verse 4, repetition of the question. We know, here's the evaluation, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world.

That there is no God but one. That's a true statement, right? There is no such thing as an idol in the world. There are no lowercase g gods. There are no other gods save one.

For even if there are so called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, and he says, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, you say, well, he says there are none, but he says there are some. Well, in this world, when you walk around, you'll see a lot of idols and gods and see a lot of things that people put up and place there in that position.

They're not real. They're not true. They're there. He'll answer it further in chapter 10. But here we're given an honest evaluation. Even though a lot of people put things on a pedestal, call them a God. Yet for us, there is but one God. Here's the honest evaluation. There is but one God, the Father. Now, jump over. And one Lord, Jesus Christ.

[25 : 17] This is true. This is an honest evaluation. No matter what anybody says, no matter what society declares, no matter what is portrayed, no matter how much it is promoted, there is but one.

There is one Father and one Lord. None of us. Then we also see this evaluation here, that there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things.

Now, look at this. This is another honest evaluation. And we exist for him. Now, wait a minute.

Now, all of a sudden, our liberties and our freedoms are being filtered through a truth. You do not exist for yourself.

Neither do I. We know that there is one God, the Father, through whom are all things, and we exist for him.

[26 : 23] him. And one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through him.

What does that say? The moment we accept Jesus Christ, the moment we accept Jesus Christ, and we are freed from the rule of all lowercase g gods that we have put over our life, the moment we are freed from the things that hold us back, the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, because of the work of Jesus Christ, we have an existence through Jesus to the Father, and our whole reason for existence is for the Father.

Oh, now, this gets a little close. We start talking about motivation for sanctified living. Jesus didn't just come to die and pay the price for you so you could live however you wanted to.

Remember Paul's repeated theme. For you are not your own. You have been bought with a price. He died on the cross of Calvary to redeem me from the auction block of sin, and that through that redemption price I could have my existence unto God for God.

Oh, when we begin to look at salvation as being for the purpose that the whole reason I'm here is for the glory of the Lord God Almighty, not for the freedoms of Billy Joe Calvert.

[27 : 51] Big difference. If heaven is the reward and the purpose in the end, if heaven is all salvation is about, then wouldn't it be so much more gracious that the moment we accept him if he called us there?

I don't know about you. I am now nearly 22 years into a walk of faith.

Some of you much longer than me. 22 years into a walk of faith. I accepted Jesus Christ shortly before I turned 21.

I'm about to turn 43. So I'm almost to the date, 22 years. It was in July. 22 years in a walk of faith. In those 22 years, it hasn't always been easy.

There have been struggles. There have been hardships. There have been difficulties. There have been loss. There have been discomforts. There have been stumblings. There have been fallings. There have been mountaintops.

[28 : 54] There have been valleys. But if the whole reason he redeemed me was to get me to heaven, it would have been so much better if 22 years ago he had called me there. Because there, the streets are made of gold.

There, the dwelling place is already being built. There, there's the river of life. There, there's the tree that's present. There, there's all the rewards we could ever hope for.

There, there's no suffering. There's no pain. There's no sorrow. There's no loss. If that's what it's all about, then a good and gracious God would have called me there. Heaven is the end of the game. It's not just the goal of the salvation. Salvation is called so that we may exist for God's glory in the time he has put us here. Remember, I know I'm getting very wordy and some of you think that it's a little technical, but we need to understand it.

We cannot rightly understand our salvation until we have a proper interpretation of the book of Exodus. And I'm not going to take you all the way through that. But long story short, the book of Exodus, God notices his people.

[30 : 04] He calls them out of the land of Egypt. He redeems them out of the land of Egypt for the purpose of putting them on display to a watching world. He sets them apart by all the laws and regulations and all the requirements and all those things that are kind of cumbersome to us in the book of Leviticus and Numbers, all these standards.

The whole reason is so that the world may look at them and wonder what's different about them, that the world may see them and say, oh, they look so blessed, and that the world would try to figure out. He set them apart so that they would stand out.

And when he set them apart, that is, sanctified them, they were to stand out so that the world would say, what they got is better than what I got, and the world would be drawn to the Father.

They got in trouble because they forgot to be sanctified and began to be a little bit kind of inundated with the world, and they began to look too much like the world that the world didn't desire to be like them.

Listen, friend, what happened in the Old Testament is happening today. The reason the church doesn't look at the world and want what we have is because we ain't got anything different than

they do. Sanctification, the honest evaluation is we exist for God.

[31 : 19] Now, last, finally, we notice here there's this abrupt shift. Since we know these truths, verse 7 says, however, not all men have this knowledge.

The things that we know that are true, not everybody has that. However, not all men have this knowledge. But some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sanctified or sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

Number three, we see honoring decisions. So the question is, should I eat the cheaper meat? Paul says, well, it's really not about you.

It's not about how much you can save. It's not about what's right and wrong for you. One of the things we understand all through Scripture, especially in the New Testament, is God speaks to the corporate body, not just to the individual person.

He says, not all have that. Verse 8 tells us, but food will not commend us to God. We are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. We know that, right?

[32 : 29] When I sit down this afternoon, I already know what I'm having for lunch. We prepared it this morning. It's at the house cooking. When I sit down and I eat that lunch, it's not going to make me closer to God.

It's not going to make me further from God. With any grand desire, it will meet the pressing needs of my body, and it will enable me and empower me to live longer for his glory.

It says, for if, in verse 10, someone sees you who have knowledge dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?

Now, here's the problem. The problem is not, are you free to do it? The question is, is everyone free to do it? Or if my freedom and my liberty would be a stumbling block for someone else?

This is where we have to make honoring decisions. Verse 11 is so powerful. For through your knowledge, he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.

[33 : 38] People ask quite often, Pastor, can I do this? Or am I able to do that? Or Pastor, is it wrong if I do this? And maybe you don't ask me, maybe you ask yourself that, and maybe you like to justify yourself and say, well, there are no rules and stipulations and regulations in Scripture, and I can't find it in black, white, or red there.

God didn't say one way or another. He left it up to me and my conscience. And right. And that's okay. It's all well and good, because the problem in that is all we're focused on is ourself. The question is not really, am I free to do this?

The question should be, is if I do this, does it have the potential to hurt someone else? Will my freedom become a stumbling block for someone else?

And the word it says there in verse 11, it says, my knowledge, if I do the wrong thing, though I am free to do it, my knowledge will ruin.

The word ruin means to disqualify from any further service. That's a pretty strong word, right? To disqualify from any further service or usefulness.

[34 : 45] Do you know how many believers in history have accepted Jesus Christ? The moment they accept Jesus Christ, Christ called them for a reason and a purpose. He empowered them with the gift of the Spirit.

He united them to the body of Christ, Ephesians 4. All Ephesians 4 says that he puts every part and portion in the body. He fits the body together so that every part may supply its work.

That there's a reason for that believer to be there. And then they see another believer doing something, they end up falling into that same habit and they are ruined. No longer can they ever be used for useful service.

Oh, how great a weight. And Paul says, that person that has been ruined was a brother that Christ died for.

And by sinning against the brother, you have sinned against Christ. Therefore, I will never eat meat again. Paul says, I won't even buy the good stuff.

[35 : 55] If it causes my brother to stumble. See, Paul's motivation for sanctified living was a concern for others.

When we ask ourselves a question and I'm wrapping up, should I do this or that? I know you're not buying meat from an idol's temple. When you ask yourself, am I free to do this or that?

Or can I do this or that? Or does Christ care if I do this or that? What if we asked ourselves, would this cause the weakest of the believers to stumble?

