

Text: 1 Cor 8.1-13

As we move through Corinthians, we will keep our place by developing the broad outline we started with.

I. Introduction (1.1-9)**II. Conditions reported to Paul (1.10-6.20)**

- A. Divisions in the church (1.10-4.21)
- B. Lack of discipline in the church (5.1-6.20)

III. Questions asked of Paul (7.1-16.4)

1 Cor 7.1 ¶ Now concerning the things about which you wrote...

“The remainder of the body of this epistle deals with questions that the Corinthians had asked Paul in a letter. Paul introduced each of these with the phrase *peri de* (‘now concerning,’ 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).”¹

- A. Questions about marriage (7.1-40)
- B. Questions about things sacrificed to idols (8.1-11.1)

Identifying the Scriptural unit:

Key verses: 8.1, 4; 9.4; 10.6-7, 10, 19-21

What is the unifying theme of these verses? **Eating and drinking things offered to idols**

Interpretive controversy:

“The commentators understand the situation that Paul addressed in two different ways. Some of them believe that the eating of marketplace food that pagans had previously offered to idols was non-moral (not a moral issue) in itself, but it was controversial enough to cause division among the church members. ... Other interpreters believe that eating food sacrificed to idols involved a specific form of idolatry and was therefore not non-moral but sinful (cf. 5:10–11).”²

I believe the problem is much more significant than merely eating marketplace food (mentioned as an exception at the *end* of the argument in Chapter 10).

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 7.1.

² Constable, 1 Cor 8.1.

Key reasons for my view:

The meaning of “things sacrificed to idols” (8.1 etc.): “an animal sacrificed in the presence of an idol and eaten in the temple precincts.”³

The obvious implication of 1 Cor 8.10: “For if someone sees you ... dining in an idol’s temple”

My outline for the passage:

1. Weakness of the brother (8)
2. Worth of the gospel (9)
3. Wickedness of the heart (10)

The Weakness of the Brother

1. Attitudes (1-3)

What is contrasted in these verses? **Knowledge and love**

What is the danger of knowledge? **It puffs up (makes arrogant)**

What is the weakness of knowledge? (2) **None of us can know everything**

What is the value of love? (3) **Fellowship with God**

2. Knowledge of idols (4-6)

What do we know about idols and God? (4) **There is no such thing as idols, there is only God**

When Paul refers to “so-called gods,” what is he referring to? (5) **The beliefs of many pagans (contemporary people likewise believe there are many spiritual forces [some impersonal] that control destiny).**

But for *all* Christians, what is the thing they know for certain? (6) **There is only one God and one Lord**

3. The concern that over-rides knowledge: love for the brother (7-13)

What is the implication of verse 7? **Some people are weak in knowledge, and to eat such food is to be in fellowship with an idol and what it represents**

What does Paul mean in verse 8? **Food makes no difference to us spiritually — whether we eat it or not**

What is the danger of indulging in meat offered to idols since idols are nothing? (9-11) **The person with a weak [sensitive] conscience towards the idols might stumble and violate his conscience**

³ Ben Witherington III, “Not So Idle Thoughts About Eidothuton,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44, no. 2 (1993): 240.

When you act with disregard to your brother's conscience, what does Paul call it? (12) **sin**

What is Paul's conclusion? (13) **If idol-food causes my brother to stumble, I won't ever eat it again**

One last consideration:

Why doesn't Paul mention the prohibition of things offered to idols mentioned in Acts 15 as the decree of the Jerusalem Council?

Ac 15.28-29 "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

It seems that Paul is responding to their objections to this teaching, he has already given them this instruction.

One reason this seems so is the combative nature of the argument Paul is making.