1 Corinthians Series

**The Church in Corinth**

July 30, 2023

**Managing the Grey Areas**

(1 Corinthians 8:1-13)

Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that “we all have knowledge” about this issue. But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church. Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn’t really know very much. But the person who loves God is the one whom God recognizes. So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God. There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. But for us, There is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and through whom we live. However, not all believers know this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their weak consciences are violated. It’s true that we can’t win God’s approval by what we eat. We don’t lose anything if we don’t eat it, and we don’t gain anything if we do. But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. For if others see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, won’t they be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been offered to an idol? So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble.

Introduction:

In the 1st century churches, these were the questions being asked by Jews and Gentiles alike as they were beginning to work out their new found salvation in Jesus Christ.

* Could Christians eat meat?
* Could Christians eat meat that the Old Testament law prohibited as unclean?
* Could Jewish Christians eat with Gentile Christians?
* Could Christians eat food that has been sacrificed to idols?
* Could they do so if the meal was in a pagan temple?
* What if the meat were sold in the meat market?
* What if it were eaten privately at home?

Here’s a bit of context to help our understanding…

* There were many pagan temples in the Corinthian culture. These temples were common social meeting places for the community to gather. Think of them as clubs, bars, VFW halls, places where people gathered socialized and did business together.
* In these spaces, people often partook of the food that was made available from the temples.
* It was a general practice that meat which had been offered in sacrifice to an idol god was first given to the priests; but what was left over was often sold within the temple or the local meat markets to the general public.
* Before coming to Christ, the Corinthians would have thought nothing of buying and eating this meat. But now, having come to faith in Jesus, the use of it had become a question and must have been a point of division in the church to the extent that the church wrote to Paul for guidance.

When we look at what was going on in the church at Corinth, at least 2 different convictions are at play about this question.

* Some took the approach that idols were not really gods anyway and so meat offered to an idol meant nothing and it could be eaten without concern. This is what Paul believed.
* Others saw the meat as instruments used in pagan worship of idol gods, a practice from which they were recently saved.

Paul’s concern is for how the differences of opinion are affecting the fellowship of believers.

(I Corinthians 8:8-13)

But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. For if others see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, won’t they be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been offered to an idol? So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble.

So how do we manage the grey areas in our walk with Christ?

**In All Things, Keep the Cross of Jesus Christ Front and Center**

* The centrality of the Cross is the unifier of our fellowship.

(Philippians 2:12)

…work out your salvation with fear and trembling…

* Our salvation is both a work of **DIVINE INVOLVEMENT** and **HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY**
* In making choices, keep YOUR witness of Jesus to unbelievers in mind

(1 Corinthians 6:12)

You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” **I must not become a slave to anything**.

(1 Corinthians 10:23-24)

You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is beneficial. **Don’t be concerned for your own good but for the good of others**.

**Our Fellowship As Believers Must Be Seasoned with Grace and Sensitivity**

(1 Corinthians 8:1-3, MSG)

The question keeps coming up regarding meat that has been offered up to an idol: Should you attend meals where such meat is served, or not? We sometimes tend to think we know all we need to know to answer these kinds of questions—*but* sometimes our humble hearts can help us more than our proud minds. We never really know enough until we recognize that God alone knows it all.

* What we do KNOW makes us responsible
* The greater law is love
  + Love becomes the key to all the behavior of the believer.
  + Our responsibility is to build up one another in love
* If we disagree on something, (the Scriptures are not clear)
* Can we love one another?
* Can we grow together in God’s love to be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ?

(1 Corinthian 6:19-20)

…You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price…

Conclusion:

(1 Corinthians 2:12-13, NASB)

…work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**

(v.13, LB)… For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants.