

“Meats Offered to Idols”

1 Corinthians 8:4-13

INTRO:

Paul is dealing with an issue that would fall in a category that we might call the "grey area." "Grey area" things are issues that the Bible does not specifically prohibit or permit. The things that are grey areas for us are significantly different than things that fell into the grey area for the first century church at Corinth.

However, the principles, determining what we are to do, have not changed. Let us then listen carefully to what Paul has to say to these Corinthians about how to deal with ***“meat offered to idols.”*** Then we must apply the principles to the 21st century Church situation.

Our exploration has two parts.

I. Laying Down a Second Principle (v. 4-6)

II. How We Are To Apply Our Knowledge (v. 7-13)

I. Laying Down a Second Principle (v. 4-6)

A. In **v4**, Paul returned to the subject at hand. He delayed writing directly about meats offered to idols because before dealing with the issue as presented in the Corinthian letter, Paul needed to lay down an important principle. In short, Paul pointed out to us the importance of mixing knowledge with love. He said that ***knowledge alone “puffed up” but knowledge mixed with love “built up.”*** The latter makes a permanent and positive change in the lives of people.

B. In **v4**, Paul picks up the subject again.

“Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.”

1. Idols do not represent real gods. In making this statement, Paul agreed with the writers of the Old Testament.

2. For example, the 115th Psalm says, ***“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth. Why should the Gentiles say, ‘So where is their God?’ But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them.”***

While idols are not really gods at, there is more to this story as we will learn in **Ch 10**.

C. The second thing the Corinthians rested upon was ***“there is no other God but one.”*** No doubt, from his boyhood Paul had been taught the *Shema Yisrael* in **Deuteronomy 6:4**
“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

There are many who claimed to be gods. From the beginning of time, most intelligent people recognized that there had to be someone who made all of what we see. They sought to worship this unseen divine being or beings by creating physical representations of these "gods" and worshipping them. That is where the false gods came from.

D. **V5** causes us to stop and scratch our heads. What is Paul doing here?

“For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords.”

Paul probably was starting to qualify the two premises the Corinthians are using to justify their liberty to go to the idol temples and eat.

1. While it is true that the gods represented by the idols do not really exist, the false gods do exist in the minds of the idol worshippers. That does not mean that we have to acknowledge them or serve them.

2. This mean some who have come out of idolatry may still struggle with this truth. False gods may have existence in these believers' minds.

E. Having introduced a dimension to this discussion that the Corinthians had not considered, Paul began to draw out the significance of what they claim that they know. In **v6** Paul wrote;

“Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.”

1. The Corinthian believers say they believe that there is one God. Saying this has some important implications. While Paul asserts that there is only one God, he points out two of the three persons of the Godhead. God the Father is a personal God with whom we have a relationship.

If He is our Father, He has responsibilities toward us in this relationship. We also have responsibilities toward Him. Remember the statement that God made in **Malachi 1:6**
“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts.”

Since we know God the Father, we know that God is the source of our very existence,
“of whom are all things.” If he made all things, it only follows that He has a purpose

for making them. Paul adds, ***“and we for Him.”*** Paul is interested in the purpose for our lives. We were created to glorify God, and to do His will. Do we recognize this actively every moment of our lives?

2. Then Paul spoke about our Lord Jesus, the Son of God.

“And one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.”

Although some would point out that Paul does not specifically call the Lord Jesus God, Paul assumes Jesus is God.

The Lord Jesus is the One through whom God the Father created and redeemed. Through Christ’s work the world exists. Paul adds, ***“and we through Him.”*** In short, we owe everything to Him. If we recognize this reality it should have a profound effect upon our actions.

F. Lord willing, next time we will look at how Paul works out these implications in the lives of these Corinthians who were arguing about their rights. But before we close, let us think a little bit about what this means in our lives.

1. First, notice that true theology is not just theoretical. If we really believe in the God of the Bible, then what we know will change the way we live.

If we know that God is omnipresent, then we know that there is nowhere that we can escape His presence. If we recognize that He is omniscient, we know that He knows all of our thoughts before we think them. If we know He is omnipotent, then we know that there is not a problem that we have that He cannot solve.

2. Second, if we recognize that God created us with a purpose and we know Him as our Father, we will want to accomplish that purpose in our lives no matter the cost to us.

How about us? Do we recognize the practical implications of our theology? Are we living them out in our lives?