

A TIME FOR SURRENDER

1 Corinthian 8-9

There's no better test of spiritual maturity than how a person handles doubtful things.

Legalistic teaching abounds Lists of "favorite sins" some people thrive on.

How we deal with such issues shows our love, or lack of love, for others.

It should come as no surprise that this problem raised its ugly head in Corinth — a church famous for carnality and lack of love..

The problem has existed in the church from its beginning—and still does!

How do WE decide what we should or shouldn't do?

GENUINE LOVE SUPERSEDES PERSONAL LIBERTY

Believers at Corinth have adopted a number of the world's attitudes:

"I have my rights!" "You have to look out for #1!"

THEY'RE CRITICIZING EACH OTHER about eating meat offered to idols.

THOSE NOT ABLE TO EAT BASE ARGUMENTS ON THE LAW.

We aren't to be part of the world system.

By eating meat offered to idols we participate in the system.

We're acting like pagan idolaters.

If you do this, you're carnal and worldly!

THOSE ABLE TO EAT HAVE GOOD ARGUMENTS ALSO:

There are no other gods,

eating meat offered to something which doesn't exist can't hurt us.

God has cleansed the old, unclean meats.

Stop being legalistic and immature! Enjoy your freedom in Christ!

Paul's response is *not exactly* what we like to hear—it doesn't make *anybody* happy!

He encourages those *worldly* people by telling them it's O.K. to eat the meat!

We still can't eat it, because we aren't suppose to "offend" those immature legalists.

Love says: *Know what your rights are, . . .*

. . . but surrender those rights for the good of others.

MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS (and other doubtful things) 8:1-11:1

ISSUE DEFINED

The problem at Corinth is *different* than the situation in **Rom 14-15**:

- It grew out of conflict between Jews and Gentiles.
- Observance of O.T. practices—especially not eating unclean meat (Cp. Acts 10)

At Corinth, it arises from their background in heathen practices.

Should they buy less expensive meat which has been offered to idols?

Two possible positions.

Paul never says who is right!

Paul builds on the same basic principles as in Rom. 14-15

Many no longer worship the pagan gods,

but continue to participate in temple festivals for social reasons.

Or, a Christian might be invited to have dinner at an unsaved neighbor's house.

He could assume the meat would come from an animal sacrificed to a pagan god."

How should we handle that?

This isn't *our* problem, BUT WE HAVE OTHERS TO REPLACE IT!

- What do you do about an ex-alcoholic friend who feels awkward at parties because everyone is *drinking*? Or, is troubled by Christians "enjoying a social drink?"
- Paul Little tells about former *baseball* fanatic who didn't miss a Phillies game in 12 years, and gave it all up. He's troubled when a church group wants to go to a ball game.
- An ex-casino worker is troubled when he sees Christians playing *cards*.
- A woman who grew up in a small town where the *bowling* alley, pool hall and bar were all together, can't understand how Christians can go bowling.
- A young man who has struggled with sexual temptation is bothered when Christians see no harm in *dancing*.
- Some who come out of drug scene, warn us about the dangers of *rock music*.
- Some, burned by debt crisis, can't understand how God's people *borrow or lend money*.

Ken Chafin tells of a discussion group.

Asks participants to list "*THINGS WHICH ARE ALWAYS WRONG FOR EVERYBODY*."

Then a list of "*THINGS WHICH ARE ALWAYS RIGHT FOR ALL PEOPLE*."

"Neither is easy, because lists of things always right or always wrong aren't the same.

Leader put disputed activities under heading:

'THINGS WHICH SEEM WRONG TO SOME CHRISTIANS BUT NOT TO ALL.'

That's the kind of issue Paul is dealing with in 1 Corinthians 8.

Doubtful things—*must be amoral in themselves*

THE BIBLE CLEARLY SAYS SOME THINGS ARE WRONG

(=> DON'T DO THEM!) :

Prov 6:16-19 *There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.*

Col 3:5-9 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry... 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices*

Gal 5:19-21 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Some things are included that we don't include on our lists!

When the Bible prohibits something, it's not subject to discussion.

God doesn't call for a vote! *DON'T DO IT!*

THE BIBLE CLEARLY SAYS SOME THINGS ARE RIGHT

(=> DO THEM!) :

1 Jn 1:7 ... if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 Jn 4:10-11 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

When the Bible requires something, there's no discussion. **JUST DO IT!**

THE BIBLE SAYS SOME THINGS MAKE NO DIFFERENCE TO GOD:

THEY'RE NEUTRAL in and of themselves.

1 Cor. 8-10—Eating meat offered to idols

Apostles taking a wife (9:5)

Apostles not working at a regular job (9:6-11, 13-14)

Rom. 14-15—Eating unclean meat (Cp. Acts 10-11)

Rom 14:2-6 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³ The man who eats everything must not look down on him who

does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him.... ⁵ One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind ⁶ He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

THE BIBLE DOESN'T CLEARLY DEFINE OR SAYS NOTHING ABOUT SOME THINGS:

Many 21st C. issues: Playing Cards, Smoking, Dancing, etc.

Corinth is divided over meat– *Paul never tells us which side is right!*

Those who have freedom recognize that **God has freed us** from legalism

They accuse the others of **immaturity** and **legalism**.

Those who can't eat meat accuse the others of being **worldly** and **carnal**.

They're "**identifying with the world and its way of doing things.**"

"Scripture is clear that we aren't to touch such things."

PRINCIPLE EXPLAINED 8:1-13

5 principles to apply when Christians can't agree on what God has said

Principle #1 – [assumed] **Determine which category the issue belongs to.**

Jews believed – not touching unclean meats – circumcision – sabbath observance

... are all **biblical** laws, established by **God**.

They demonstrate how important it is to be careful how we use God's Word.
Some laws are given for specific people or circumstances.

Is this a biblically clear-cut issue?

Some people stick every activity they don't approve of under **1 Pet 1:15-16** “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

How do we determine what GOD considers holy, if HE doesn't speak to an issue?

Some people misuse passages, not paying attention to similarities or differences compared to our situation.

Peter says about Jewish dialogue with Paul:

they twist the Scriptures to make them fit their own criteria.

We have to be careful how we use Scriptures — to define category.

Principle #2 – (Basic principle) **Love supersedes knowledge 8:1-3**

We all *know* there are two views:

1. False gods don't exist => to eat meat offered to them can't hurt us!
2. Since we've come out of old system, we shouldn't go back to it.

Both views have a valid argument.

Basic principle: **LOVE SUPERSEDES KNOWLEDGE (8:1-3)**

All through 1 Cor. 8 Paul emphasizes knowledge:

We all *know* certain things.

v. 4—we *know* that there is no such thing as an idol

v. 4—we *know* that there is only one God

v. 8—we *know* that food isn't the basis of our relationship with God.

v. 8—we *know* that eating it, or not eating it, won't help or hurt our relationship with God.

Since we *know* this, we can do whatever we feel like, right? WRONG!

Danger isn't in what we know, but how we use what we know.

Warren Wiersbe:

"You can't force-feed immature believers and transform them into giants."

Knowledge makes us proud. *It puffs us up. It enlarges our head.*

LOVE EDIFIES. It helps us build each other up.

KNOWLEDGE PUFFS UP – LOVE BUILDS UP

So then, which should rule?

If knowledge rules, we get a big head, but divide God's work.

If love rules, God's people are built up.

That's the heart of the matter: => **Love supersedes knowledge.**

Principle #3 – In Christ we have liberty 8:4-6

We're free to do as we wish, as long as we submit to the Holy Spirit.

Rom 14:3 *The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for **God has accepted him.***

Col 2:20-23 *Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, **why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”?** 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

1 Cor 9:4-6 ***Don't we have the right** to food and drink? 5 **Don't we have the right** to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?*

1 Cor 8:8 *...food does not bring us near to God; **we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.***

Spirituality does not depend on our use, or lack of use, of such things.

We have liberty in Christ!

Our relationship with God is NOT based on keeping a set of rules.

We're no better because we do or don't do certain things. BUT, ...

Principle #4 – Don't use liberty in a way that causes others to fall 8:7-12

By doing what WE want, we may ruin somebody else's walk with God. =>

Principle #5 – Surrender our liberty for the benefit of others 8:13

This is probably the hardest principle in the Christian life to live by!

PRINCIPLE ILLUSTRATED 9:1-27

Principle: LOVE SUPERSEDES KNOWLEDGE illustrated from *HIS* life:

Paul surrenders HIS rights for others' good.

Although he could insist on his rights as an apostle,
he has chosen to surrender his rights to be acceptable and not be an offense.

PRIVILEGES AS AN APOSTLE 9:1-14

As an apostle, Paul *KNOWS* he is entitled to certain rights: 1-3

He refers to his "*rights*" 6 times in this passage:

3 RIGHTS he has:

(1) To eat and to drink 4

That's what the Corinthians want!

(2) To take a wife 5

That's a good thing! But he gives up his right, for their sake!

(3) To be supported financially 6-14 9:6

7-14–Presents argument in defense of this:

It's a right you can't deny on basis of biblical evidence!

SURRENDER OF PRIVILEGES 9:15-23

Paul gives up his rights 15-18

Paul surrenders his rights for the sake of the gospel.

v. 12—In spite of the evidence, he hasn't used this right

v. 15—

v. 18—He doesn't take advantage of his right

Why not, if it's his right?

v. 12b—"*so as not to create a hindrance to the gospel.*"

v. 15b—he'd rather die than allow *this* to hinder ministry
and stop him from doing what was most important in his life.

Paul made himself a slave to everyone 19-23 19, 22

He accepts the conscience of those to whom he ministers.

—to stop any cause for offense.

DETERMINATION NOT TO OFFEND 9:24-27

Paul disciplines himself so that he might win the prize.

It's hard to live this way (Cp. training for olympics; marathon runner's preparation)

It isn't realistic to expect EVERYONE to live by the athletes' strict training rules!

However, if you want to compete and win, you accept lifestyle rules others don't!

You have to give up some *really good things*!

3) **Enter the race; pay the price** – It will cost you plenty

"It's going to be a lot of effort, but it's worth the price."

Paul chooses the 3rd option.

He enters the race.

He voluntarily submits to strict self-discipline

He pays the price and wins the prize.

He KNOWS he has his rights.

He surrenders his rights

He becomes a slave of all people

He disciplines himself in order to win the prize.

The price is worth it because of the results.

He does it so those he works with won't reject his message through disapproving of him.

Which option will WE take?

Are we willing to surrender our rights for the good of others?

What will it cost you personally? Is the price too high?

This attitude isn't popular today!

It's not for everyone!

Only those who want to be champions in God's book of records pay the price!

Champions are people willing to pay the price to win the race.

They know it will cost them plenty to give up their rights for the benefit of others.

But they determine to follow Paul's example, and the Lord's.

Motivated by LOVE, we give up our rights, and **God is glorified by our love!**