

Chapter 8

The problem 8:1-13

v1 Now I want to deal with the question about food that someone has sacrificed to idols. We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes people proud. But love helps them. v2 A person may think that he knows. Then he still does not know as he should. v3 But God knows the person who loves him. v4 So then, someone may have offered meat to idols. Here is what I say about that meat. We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world. We know that there is only one God. v5 There may be so-called gods either in heaven or earth. (There are in fact many 'gods' and many 'lords'.) v6 But, for us, there is only one God. He is the Father. All things come from him, and we live for him. And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things came by him, and we live by him.

v7 But not everyone knows this. Some people still think about it as food that someone has offered to a real god. Because they have a weak sense of right and wrong, they feel guilty. v8 But food does not bring us close to God. We are no worse if we do not eat. We are no better if we do eat. v9 But be careful how you use your freedom. Make sure that it does not cause a weak person to sin. v10 Perhaps you, who have this knowledge, are eating in an idol's temple. And suppose that a person with a weak sense of right and wrong sees you. That person will probably start to eat meat that someone has sacrificed to idols. v11 So your knowledge destroys the weak brother or sister for whom Christ died. v12 When you sin against your brothers in this way, you wound their weak conscience. When you do this, you sin against Christ. v13 What I eat may cause my brother or sister to sin. If so,

then I will never eat meat again. In that way, I will not cause him to sin.

Verse 1 The Christians at Corinth had asked Paul about this problem. Meat was expensive. But it became available when Jews or pagans offered sacrifices. The priests burnt a small part of the meat on the altar. Then the priests kept some. They gave the rest back to the person who offered it. He would often make a feast for his friends. This would be a pleasant social occasion. Sometimes it was a public sacrifice by the state. Then they sold the rest of the meat cheaply in the market. So it was difficult to get meat that did not involve worship. There was no problem in Jerusalem because the meat was a sacrifice to God. But in other cities, the meat had been offered to a pagan god. Christians were not sure if it was right to eat that meat. Some people in Corinth worried about it. Other people were proud of their superior knowledge. They thought that there was no problem. They thought that they could eat such meat. Paul's answer was especially for those people.

The Christians at Corinth said that they had 'knowledge'. Paul told them that 'knowledge' can make people proud about themselves. Real knowledge comes from love. Love thinks about the needs of other people and it makes their faith stronger. Paul prayed for the Christians at Philippi: 'I pray that you will continue to love each other more and more. I pray that you will continue to know God more and more. Then you will understand things more completely. You will understand why things are right or wrong.' (See Philippians 1:9.)

Verses 2-3 The Christians at Corinth thought that they had real knowledge about the way to behave. But they did not possess real

knowledge. The one who really 'knows' is the one who loves.

Verse 4-6 Paul uses words from their letter. They know that there is only one God. And they know that idols are not alive. Pagans believed that there were many 'gods and lords'. 'Lords' was the word that pagans used to describe some of the special gods in their religion. But Christians believe in one God and one Lord. God is the Father. We can be his children. He created all things. He created us to carry out his plans. Jesus is the one Lord. 'Lord' was the name for God in the Old Testament. God created everything. It was by Jesus that God rescued people from their sin. These words about God and Jesus are like the beginning of a statement about Christian belief.

Verse 7 Some Christians at Corinth did believe that idols are not alive. But they could not completely forget their belief that the pagan gods had power over their lives. They had believed in them for a long time. So it worried them to eat this meat. It worried them because someone had offered it to an idol. So, they thought that it would be better not to eat it. Some new Christians find it hard to stop worshipping their ancestors.

Verse 8 These may be the words of the Christians at Corinth, with which Paul would agree. To eat or not to eat food makes no difference to God. They are like Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:19 that circumcision or lack of circumcision was not important.

Verses 9-10 To eat food that pagans had offered to idols might, however, cause a problem for someone with a troubled conscience. The 'weak' Christian may copy the 'strong' Christian if he sees him eat in a pagan temple.

Verse 11 Now the weak Christian has eaten food that someone has offered to an idol. So now the weak Christian may lose his faith completely. He is a brother for whom Christ died.

Verse 12 The 'strong' Christians had forgotten that they were part of a Christian family. Anything that made a Christian 'brother' sin was a sin against Christ himself.

Verse 13 Paul was willing to limit his own freedom. He would never make it difficult for another Christian. His action might be good in itself. But it would be wrong if it caused another believer to sin.

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