

The Book of 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Session 33: Idol Meats in Corinth

When we left off in our previous session we were about to look at vs. 3. But that verse is understood in the context of vv. 1-2, so let's read them together.

1 Corinthians 8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but **charity edifieth.**² And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.³ But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Notice that vs. 3 starts with "But..." which ties it back to the previous verses. "But" is a corner word, which means that it is about to take you in a different direction. So what was that direction? Verse 2 is talking about the man that is puffed up with his knowledge.

Paul says, if you have knowledge, it will make you prideful. What he is saying is that knowledge alone produces pride. He says in vs. 1, "but...charity edifieth." Learning to value and esteem our fellow saints will keep us from being puffed up.

In vs. 2, Paul is saying, if all you have is knowledge, and that it is not combined with charity, then even with your knowledge, you don't know anything, for that knowledge alone is insufficient without charity.

Then, in vs. 3, he moves from the man who has knowledge alone, with no charity, to say, "But if any man love God, the same is known of him." In other words, If you truly love God, your "knowledge" will be accompanied by "charity" and it will be "known of him;" which is to say, it will be evident in his life by his words and actions.

So, what is the principle contained in these three verses? In matters of Christian liberty, love must rule over knowledge.

It makes sense that having established this principle, the next thing Paul will do is demonstrate what happens when we apply knowledge without love.

1 Corinthians 8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that **an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.**

This is quite a statement seeing that in Corinth, people worshipped hundreds of gods, and here comes Paul saying there is only one God. In other words, the statue of Zeus is nothing, because it is man-made and it cannot animate itself. And, there is no god like the true and living God.

That is not to say that there is no cosmic creature behind idol worship, there is. And Paul will address this in chapter 10. But the idol itself is nothing but a man-made object, and that is what Paul is addressing here in chapter 8.

Don't lose track that Paul's main topic is liberty; he is using the occasion of eating meat offered to idols to explain our liberty in Christ.

Paul starts off by saying that the actual carved figure of an idol is nothing. It cannot speak, hear, or move on its own. It is the creation of some person. Therefore, the idol, in and of itself, is nothing.

This is why the Bible sometimes refers to them as "dumb idols" referring to the fact that they cannot speak.

Habakkuk 2:18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make **dumb idols?**¹⁹ Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and *there is no breath at all in the midst of it.*

See the phrase "dumb idols?" They are dumb in that they cannot speak. Even though the idolator will say to the stone he has carved the idol from, "Arise, it shall teach!" It cannot. The prophet says, "There is no breath at all in the midst of it." It cannot speak, and it cannot move.

The reason I bring this up is because this tells us something about the nature of the deception which will come upon the world when this dispensation of the grace of God (DoGG) has come to a close, and God's prophetic program with Israel

has resumed, and the events of the mid-point of Daniel's 70th Week begin to take place.

The false prophet, who will be the religious leader who works in tandem with the Antichrist, will perform miracles which will deceive everyone but the Believing Remnant (BR).

Revelation 13:11 And I beheld **another beast** coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.¹² And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, **and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast**, whose deadly wound was healed.¹³ And **he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven** on the earth in the sight of men,

This “calling down fire” is a copy of something done by Elijah the prophet back in 1 Kings 18, (the third course of punishment). Why counterfeit this miracle? Because the Jews understood that Elijah the prophet would come before their Messiah would appear. He would be the forerunner of the Messiah.

I would like for us to step aside for a moment and see this issue. In Mark 9, we have the account of Jesus taking Peter, James and John up on a mountain and He is transfigured in front of them.

Mark 9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh *with him* Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.³ And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.⁴ And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

Elias is the Greek spelling of the Hebrew “Elijah.”

Mark 9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.¹⁰ And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

Now we come to the part we are after. The transfiguration establishes in no uncertain terms that Jesus is the Christ. But in the minds of the disciples, if Jesus is the Christ, then where is Elijah the prophet? I think they expect that if Jesus was indeed the Messiah, then Elijah should have first shown up. But notice how they ask Jesus about this, by putting the question in the mouths of the scribes.

Mark 9:11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? ¹² And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. ¹³ But I say unto you, **That Elias is indeed come**, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

How was it that Elias was already come? We get a better understanding by switching over to this same account in the book of Matthew.

Matthew 17:10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? ¹¹ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. ¹² But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

¹³ Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

What happened to John the Baptist? They cut his head off. So, how was John the Baptist Elias? John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah who came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Luke 1:13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt **call his name John**. ¹⁴ And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For **he shall be great** in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and **he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost**, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ **And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

What I want to establish is the fact that everyone in Israel understood that Elijah was the forerunner of the Messiah. And, they also know the story of 1 Kings 18 where Elijah called down fire from heaven.

So, if you are going to put yourself forward as Christ, then you will need a prophet who will be Elijah, and he must be able to do what Elijah did. So, the false prophet will call down fire from heaven in the sight of men.

Well, that is a strong deception, but it doesn't stop there. Remember the "dumb idol" issue we were just looking at?

Psalm 115:2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God?
³ But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.
⁴ Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands. ⁵ **They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: ⁶ They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: ⁷ They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.** ⁸ They that make them are like unto them; so *is* every one that trusteth in them.

That is the way in the time past of Israel's program; that was the way it always was. But, in the coming Tribulation, the deception will go even further. Take a look at what the false prophet does.

Revelation 13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

So, idolatry will be a part of the worship in Israel. They will make an image to the beast; the antichrist. The False Prophet will be the one driving this image to be made. Why? Because this will be the thing to convince Israel that the antichrist is their Messiah.

Revelation 13:15 And he had power **to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.**

For the first time, an image is going to speak! The image will be brought to life. This is something that has never before been accomplished. They will make this image. They will set it up in the holy place of the rebuilt temple, the false prophet will bring it to life, and it will speak. And apostate Israel will worship the beast (the Antichrist) and his image, and they will gladly take his mark or the number of his name.

I know that this giving life to the image is said to be television or some kind of technology, but there would be no miracle in that which would convince people. If the Antichrist and False Prophet are able to do something with an image, which they make, which has never been done before, they could point to the Antichrist being "God" by pointing back to Psalm 115.

Daniel calls this making and giving life to the image an abomination. They will put it in the holy place in the antichrist's rebuilt temple. When they see this take place, the Believing Remnant (BR) are told to "flee to the mountains."

Matthew 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) ¹⁶ Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

This is the signal the BR have been waiting for. And why are they told to flee? Because now will begin the extermination policy of the Antichrist against the BR, and they need to run for their lives.

Getting back to the passage in 1 Corinthians, Paul says that an idol, in and of itself, is nothing. And he is right.

But that is not to say that idolatry is nothing, because in chapter 10, Paul is going to speak to idolatry and the spiritual dangers associated with it. Was it possible for a believer in Jesus Christ to be an idolator? Yes, it was. And when people commit certain sins or have a certain lifestyle, other believers are prone to doubt their salvation. But listen and this is important to know, there is no sin on the planet that believers do not commit. You cannot tell a person's salvation by looking at their actions. And I wish every believer lived like it, but they don't.

1 Corinthians 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: ¹⁰ Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, **or with idolaters**; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

What does this mean? It means, when it comes to the saints, who should know better and behave differently, if one of them is a fornicator, then don't keep company with him. Yes, you do want to recover them from the snare of the devil, but until that time, Paul says to limit your fellowship with them. The same way with a brother who is an idolator. We tend to think those are pretty bad, but did you also notice "covetous" in the list of people not to keep company with?

But, when it comes to the lost, those guys are going to be fornicators, covetous, extortioners and idolators. Are we not to have friends or acquaintances among them? Should we do business with them or not? Do we ever socialize with them? The answer is "Yes."

So, what is the difference? The believer knows better and has the power to do better. The lost are going to act like lost people. Therefore, you don't withdraw from them for two reasons: 1) you want to win them to Christ, and 2) if you withdraw from every lost person who acts like a lost person, you would need to withdraw from the whole world! We would have to go live on the moon.

1 Corinthians 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

¹² For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? ¹³ But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Doctrinal Summation: Before we end this session, let me bring us to the doctrinal point. First Corinthians 8:3-4 is just part of the form of doctrine which runs from 1 Corinthians 8:1-10:33. This whole section is about our liberty in Christ.

First Corinthians 8:3-4 tells us that liberty without charity is wrong. Charity means we value and esteem one another the way our Father does and for the same

reasons He does. We always prefer our fellow saints over our liberty. We should develop the Sonship skill of discerning every situation of our liberty and act accordingly. This is part of godly judgment.