

^{iv}1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him. Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. “Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

^{iv} About the Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

In this reading, Paul discusses the guiding principle for resolving misunderstandings among Christians about participation in non-Christian culture. Most of the meat sold in the marketplace came from animals offered for sacrifice in pagan temples, and many social groups met for dinner in pagan shrines, though this did not necessarily involve recognition of the god.

Christians in Corinth were divided on the issues of eating such meat or going to such dinners. Some felt that there was no harm in it. Paul quotes several of their slogans with which he in theory agrees. They claim a knowledge that justifies their freedom from constraint.

The “weak” (v. 9), however, avoid such meat and such occasions out of a fierce desire to follow the law. They are upset by the actions of their fellow-Christians. They may be Jewish Christians still influenced by the prohibition of such meat, or they may be Greek Christians still influenced by their pagan past.

Paul claims that the “strong” are correct in their knowledge of the issue, but deficient in their love for fellow believers. For Paul the gospel means freedom from servitude to the law, the world and Satan, but freedom exercised in love. Charity to one’s fellow-Christians takes first place.