

not pollute but the doing of that which the unenlightened conscience forbids does pollute!

b. Their liberation. vv. 8-10. It is possible that v. 8 is a retort in the dialogue with Paul. The Corinthians object and he quotes them. They say that the abstinence or use of meats makes no difference to their intrinsic state. Paul admits all of this, but he registers a caution (v. 9). He avers that one must consider his actions and their effect upon others. "Stumbling block" in the original means an "obstacle thrown in the way for a foot to strike." Liberty is not license! Furthermore, a disregard of this principle of love (cf. v. 1) will lead to practical mischief (v.10). The verb "emboldened" means to "be edified," but to what? Unto that which he still believed to be wrong! Defiance rather than loving consideration is not true Christian liberty!

c. Their affiliation. vv. 11-12. Every word of these verses is important. Consider these thoughts: 1) "Thy knowledge"--what fidelity to grace received. 2) weak--what magnanimity. 3) brother--what love. 4) perish--what success. 5) Christ died--what gratitude. A careful and prayerful thought of these factors will alter one's action! The last word of v. 11 is amplified in the following verse. The verb "wound" means to "strike with the fist" and this is in fact done to Christ Himself (cf. Acts 9:5;

Matt. 25:40). Here is the highest of all crimes.

Conclusion Like a debate or dialogue, Paul has moved from a question down to a personal conviction (v. 13). Four times he uses the word "brother" in the closing verses (vv. 11-13) to elicit the love which is needed to control knowledge. The verb "offend" means to "set a trap stick" (cf. Matt. 3:29). Not only meat, but all food would be dealt a tethal blow unless it promoted the Gospel of Christ our Lord. The true child of God aggressively stands apart from the society which is pagan around him. He must live with earnestness against the pollution of the day. Do you?

THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"The Christian and Society"

I Corinthians 8:1-13

Introduction

1. There has always been the problem of the social intercourse between Christians and non-Christians. It is a necessary problem in view of the dynamics of the Gospel.

2. The issue over which this matter was raised at Corinth concerned meat sacrificed to idols. Banquets were held in the heathen temples in honor of the idols. Meat was sold in the markets by priests which was gained at idol sacrifices. Opportunities abounded to eat sacrificial meat. Was it right to do this or not?

3. To resolve the question raised by the Corinthians--for they did ask the question (v. 1)--the apostle Paul advances three important items:-

1. The LIMITATION of knowledge. vv. 1-3.

The "we know" (v. 1) is undoubtedly a quote from the letter received out of Corinth. It fits the proud Corinthians (cf. 4:8). What it amounts to is a virtual answer to their own question. The word "knowledge" is anarthrous, hence it is a reference to "all knowledge." They professed that everyone was equalized with knowledge! This is a false premise. Note how knowledge is limited:-

a. Its action. v. 1. Corinthians had plenty of knowledge (cf. 1:5; 4:10), but this was their peril. It breathed pride. On this account, Paul gives a sharp rebuke with this epigram: "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." The verb "puff up" comes from a Greek term meaning to "inflate." It accomplishes nothing. It is an engine of destruction when it operates alone. The alternative is "love" and this actually "edifies or builds up."

b. Its contention. v. 2. The verb "thinketh" is one which points to a man who considers his opinion the same as all others. He feels he has acquired knowledge (perfect tense) and has

actually gone to the bottom of the subject! Anyone who thinks like this only possesses imaginary knowledge for he has not yet plumbed the depths (aorist tense). Too many have knowledge in rest (perfect tense) and too few have knowledge in action (aorist tense). So knowledge alone has its limitations!

c. Its extension, v. 3. Here is a surprising turn in the argument. One would have expected a comment on what true knowledge is. He has already touched on love as being linked with knowledge (v. 1), so he now shows there is an added benefit when love is present. Assuming that a man has love for God (1st class condition), such an one is known by God. Indeed, by the use of the perfect passive tense, this is the abiding effect of the relationship. It is all a diminution of knowledge and an emphasis upon love. This is the right starting point and not knowledge! How far short mere "knowledge" comes in God's scheme of things.

2. The ELEVATION of God. vv. 4-6.

Many of our problems are resolved when the place of God is determined. Too often He is lowered to a level which is unmeaningful. Note how the Word exalts Him.

a. Over idolatry, vv. 4,5. Concerning the eating of food offered to idols, the Corinthians express themselves and Paul provides another direct quote from their letter as evidenced by the phrase "we know" (cf. v. 1). The existence of the idol is denied. Since the idol is a mere picture of the god and the god has no existence, the idol is a non-entity. The key phrase to the thought is "in the world." That is a reference to the circle of real beings. The idea is that if one were to seek for the gods, which the idols represent, in the world of real beings, none would be found! They are shams and shows for there is only one (no "other" in Greek) God! There is no denial of reputed deities (v. 5). The word "gods" suggests idols

and "lords" refers to demi-gods within Hellenistic mythology. It is interesting that their limitations are noted by the fact that even pagans consider them as rulers over "heaven or earth" but certainly not all things.

b. Over theology, v. 6. Here in positive terms is a true Christian affirmation of the facts. The title "Father" is added to the word "God" and taken in its absolute sense. It emphasizes both His Fatherhood in relation to Christ and to believers. The prepositions are used in this verse with depth of meaning. He is the Source of all things (of Whom). He is the Goal of all creation (we in Him). The preposition in this phrase means "for Whom we exist" and is a strong word noting our vocation to glorify Him (Rom. 11:36). The full Name of our Redeemer is employed "Lord" speaks of His sovereignty; "Jesus" of His Saviourhood; "Christ" of His Messiahship. Although He is not called "God", He certainly is (cf. Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Col. 2:9; Acts 20:28). He is Mediator for both creation (by Whom are all things, cf. Col. 1:15-17) and redemption (we by Him, cf. Col. 1:18-22).

The whole point for this elevation of God is to show that nothing of all that forms a part of the universe created by such a Being (offered meats in particular) can defile a believer (cf. 10:25, 26). But this is not the full answer, so consider another item!

3. The CONSIDERATION of believers, vv. 7-13

a. Their information, v. 7. The majority must always reckon with the minority, for all do not have the knowledge mentioned (vv. 1-6). The first word rendered "conscience" is really the Greek meaning "to be accustomed to." It suggests force of habit and means that by reason of their habituation up till now to the idol, there is a problem. The idol taint clings to their minds with this meat. Their "conscience" "lacks strength" (weak) and becomes defiled (Greek: pollute, cf. 1 Tim. 3:9; Rev. 3:4). The food does