

## Love Builds Up

I Corinthians 13:1-13

7/15/01

### Intro

- Mexico Team returning
- Pastor Steve leaving for Africa

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In this chapter, Paul takes up another question that the church in Corinth had written to him. This question is whether they can eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

This was a very big issue for them and very divisive.

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Pagan families would take animals to the priest for sacrifice. He would burn some on the altar, take some for himself and return the rest to the family. Also, a person could buy such meat at the market at a discount (probably put there by the priests).

Some could eat the meat with a clear conscience; others felt it would violate their conscience.

The issue becomes personal for us because there are many such **gray areas** for us as well. These can also be just as divisive.

EXAMPLES: Halloween, Christmas, Easter, drinking, Saturday worship, drinking alcohol, watching TV and movies, how we dress, etc.

We should be careful not to confuse the issues with *Christian carnality*. There are some for whom issues such as these don't matter simply because they have no convictions either way.

The key to understanding Paul's answer is found in verse 1;

Knowledge puffs, but love builds up.

### I. Knowledge Puffs Up.

- Vs 4-6      A. Through knowledge some had come to freedom.
- They were correct in their assessment of idols.
  - Paul agrees with them.
- Vs 2      B. But they hadn't known as they ought to know (they forgot one thing).
- It isn't a loving thing to do.
- Vs 3      C. The right way to have knowledge is to start with loving God.
- The results are seen in grace, humility.
  - Knowledge must have a purpose (it's relationship to God).
- Col 2:3 – All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ Jesus.

**II. What Keeps Some From Becoming Mature?**

- To our surprise, Paul says it's the weak ones who have more rules.
- It's easier for some to live by rules rather than a personal relationship to the Lord.
- Legalism is using rules as a measure of how someone stands with the Lord.

A. Young Christians.

- They're so young in Christ that they haven't come to a deeper walk in Christ.

B. Spoiled Christians.

- They should be eating the meat of the Word of God, but prefer milk.
- Some people refuse to grow.
- So it's easier just to live by a set of rules.

C. Scared Christians.

- They won't go outside because they're afraid they might get hurt, or that something bad will happen to them.
- So they stay in the prison of legalism.

**III. Love Builds Up.**

- A. Love is having others be more important than our freedom.

*Illus- I remember some time ago when there was women's discussion of what women should wear. Some said, "If a man has trouble, that's his problem!" It's true, but it's not loving.*

- B. I don't drink because I don't want to stumble a brother who struggles with alcohol.

*Illus- The pastor of a large church who wanted to take his wife to a nice place for dinner. The Matre'D wanted to do something special for them so he...*

*Illus- Visiting a friend and he tried to spike my drink...*

- C. When we hurt others, we offend their Lord.

*Illus- I remember when Chelsea got her retainer and it made her talk strangely. To offend her is to offend me.*

**Conclusion**

**Paul says, "I would rather not eat meat again, than to cause a weak Christian to stumble.**

**We have many freedoms on Christ, but love is the highest commandment of all.**

**Love edifies, meaning that it builds up our brother of sister in Christ.**