

BECOMING THE CHURCH

“Our Freedom is to be Ruled by LOVE”

(1 Corinthians 8:1-13)

Twister: (kids) One foot in, one foot out = symbolic of the Christian life. Firmly planted in blessing, & world ☺
“**Already and Not yet.**” = **You, us, The Church.** **Declared righteous, but striving** to BE righteous. Already a follower of Christ, but Daily striving to become a more faithful follower of Christ. Living in the Kingdom of God, & Not Yet.

Context: Corinth, Port City, trade city (Roman rebuilt, Greek, Jews, Near Easterners. Trade Route)

***Sin CITY = Korinthiazesthai = “To behave like a Corinthian” 1 Cor. 6:9-10 Who’s Who list of sins**

- **Paul writes to the Corinthian church he started w/ Priscilla & Aquila = pastoral theology (PRACTICAL)**
- **Topics:** (Disunity, flesh/spirit, sin in the Ch., our heavenly rewards, marriage, singleness, divorce, gray areas, men/women’s roles in the home/Ch., Lord’s Supper, what is true love, sp. Gifts, the gospel, glorified bodies)
- **Paul addresses the Corinthian Church as an UNHEALTHY Church. = Loved the World. Influenced by it**
- **Paul calls out sin** (factionalism, moral looseness, confusion, theological heresy, unsaved, godless members)
- **Letter: How is the Church supposed to act. What does a healthy church look like? Do?**
- **This series is about us BECOMING the Church God has called us into. We are the Church & We are BECOMING the Church = Already, and Not Yet = always growing, learning, changing, becoming.**
- **= A BUILDING Process, spiritual building, using the Word of God as our Blueprints.**

Paul is dealing with questions from the Corinthian Church. Very Practical Matters. How do we apply the Gospel 1 Cor. Ch 7. Dealt with sexual purity, Marriage, and divorce.

- Jesus and The New Testament takes a *more strict* stance on Sexuality, Marriage, and Divorce than the Jews and the Jewish system of the Old Testament. The Jews abused the system and were lax morally and easily divorced their wives.
- **Sexual Purity** not just physical, but mental and emotional = LUST is spiritual condition. It is a Heart condition. Gospel
- **Adultery** is not just physical, but mental and emotional = spiritual condition that affects your rel. w/ God, spouse, & other
- **Divorce** is not just physical, but mental and emotional = spiritual condition that affects your rel. w/God, spouse, children

And now Paul answers the question about our **spiritual freedom** and our ability to do whatever we want: “**Our rights**”

MAIN POINT: As Believers, we are to govern our spiritual freedoms by the rule of love, sacrificial gospel love.

READ 1 Cor. 8:1-13:

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge.

Knowledge ^[a]makes *one* conceited, but love edifies *people*. ² If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; ³ but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

⁴ Therefore, concerning the eating of food sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is ^[b]nothing at all in the world, and that there is no God but one. ⁵ For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, ⁶ yet for us there is *only* one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.

⁷ However, not all people have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat *food* as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸ Now food will not bring us ^[c]close to God; we are neither ^[d]the worse if we do not eat, nor ^[e]the better if we do eat. ⁹ But take care that this ^[f]freedom of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰ For if someone sees you, the one who has knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will his conscience, if he is weak, not be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ For through your knowledge the one who is weak is ruined, the brother *or* sister for whose sake Christ died. ¹² And so, by sinning against the brothers *and* sisters and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to sin.

The Bible is clear that **if** we are IN Christ, we are truly **FREE** (free from the shame and guilt of sin, free from the slavery of the world, free to follow our conscience to love and obey God without being under the ceremonial/levitical law, free to worship the Lord as our heart leads us, free to love others – even our enemies)

- John 8:31-34 “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly My disciples; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ³³ They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone; how *is it that* You say, ‘You will become free?’” ³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of

sin. ³⁵ Now the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.”

2 Cor. 3:17 “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.”

Gal. 5:1 “It was for freedom that Christ has set us free... But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh (become a slave again to sin); rather, **serve one another humbly in love.**” Our freedom was given to us that we may freely LOVE GOD and others by serving them!!

*We often too easily fall in the category of **Extremes**:

1. **Legalism** (live by the rules and leave no room for the Holy Spirit, either Black/WhiteGood/Bad=**no gray areas**)
Law: (you don't have to save a police officer if you don't want to. It's the law) Law stifles the Spirit.
2. **License** (Everything is acceptable unless it is expressly forbidden in Scripture = all white, all good) **dangerous**
Life according to “our own” conscience. Whatever seems right, feels right. No law against jumping off a cliff
-Eating Peanuts on a plane when you are told someone close to you has a fatal peanut allergy.**
3. **LOVE** (We should allow the Scripture, The Holy Spirit, and the model of Jesus' love guide us in our actions)

HERE is a very practical way to show Christ's love through limiting our freedom, our rights to serve others.

Vs. 1: Now concerning food sacrificed to idols, we know that *we* all have knowledge. = (We, as Believers, know that Idols are not real. And that meat/drink sacrificed to a false God does not truly taint a piece of meat. = False beliefs do not change the substance of a thing). However . . . *this Knowledge (can) make one conceited, (puffed up) but love edifies people.* ² If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; ³ but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. God is less concerned that we are ruled by our knowledge, rather than ruled by God's love [Our MISSION: To love God and others as we make disciples of all people]. This is a paradigm shift for Believers:

A. In Christ, our life is not just physical, but **SPIRITUAL** and we are to be ruled by the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

B. In Christ, our life cannot be simply ruled by knowledge or our own “rights,” but by God's sacrificial **LOVE.**

LOVE changes everything. It was God's love toward us that caused Him to send His Son to atone for our sins.

*God is calling us to look at our own lives, and others' lives & to **lead** through love, through His love first.

Vs. 4: Therefore, concerning the eating of food sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and that there is no God but one. Christianity affirms Monotheism. ONE Triune God.

Vs. 6: yet for us there is *only one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*

Trinitarianism: Reaffirmation of Trinitarian Theology: Equating Father, Son, and Spirit as all GOD equally, while there is distinction in their persons – truly THREE in ONE (Tri-unity = Trinity)

Vs. 7: However, not all people have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat *food* as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸ Now food will not bring us close to God (i.e. before God); we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. = it's just food

****Vs. 9:** But take care that this freedom of yours (your “right”) does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

¹⁰ For if someone sees you, the one who has knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will his conscience, **if he is weak**, not be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ For through your knowledge the one who is weak is ruined, the brother *or sister* for whose sake Christ died.

Our actions don't just affect us, they can be an **obstacle** to others' spiritual growth. “Stumbling Block”

-Lev. 19:14 “You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind.” Don't be cruel and hinder or hurt another intentionally.

-Matthew 16:23 Jesus said “But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.” = Man's interest, self-interest is a stumbling block, an obstacle to God's purposes and others' spiritual benefit.

-Romans 14:13 “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.”

Vs. 12: And so, **by sinning against** the brothers *and sisters* and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Paul elevates the action of willfully exercising your “rights” to the detriment of another Believer as sin. This is serious. What does this tell us about God's heart toward others?

=WE are all called to be discipling others to **grow** spiritually in their walks with Jesus. Our actions should add to their walk with Christ (enhance it. Encourage it) – **NOT detract or destroy it.**

***We are accountable for each other BECAUSE we are family.** Cain: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Gen. 4:9
Matthew 18:6 “but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin (stumble), it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

= Loving actions, sacrificial actions are serious to Jesus. Discipleship is serious to Jesus.

Phil. 2:3 “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves;”

The end result?

MAIN POINT: As Believers, we are to govern our spiritual freedoms by the rule of love, sacrificial gospel love.

Vs. 13: Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to sin. If I know that X is a stumbling block to my fellow Christian, then I will out of sacrificial love avoid it around them.

1 John 2:10 “The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

1 Peter 2:16 “Act as free people, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond-servants of God.” **What would otherwise NOT be wrong for us, becomes wrong for us when we know it would hurt a fellow Believer spiritually, morally, ethically and physically.

APPLICATION:

So what does this mean practically for you? /Church? =**The rule of love should determine my actions/choices**

- When we make decisions, we must always consider is there a chance for someone to be discouraged or led astray by my choice, even by my own personal freedom? i.e. **We don’t use real wine in Communion.**
- When you are out in public, watch your life (because others are).
- When you are at home, watch your life (because your family is watching you) *Pray before each meal as a testimony of God’s grace and provision.
- Where do you go? What do you watch? What do you listen to? What do you order? What language do you use? What you wear?
- Your actions are a testimony wherever you go (either for good or for harm).

Consider these questions when making a choice that affects not only you, but others who are watching:

1. Are my Actions/Choices leading to **Excess**? (Heb. 12:1)
2. Are my Actions/Choices solely **Expedient** (for my own desires only?) (1 Cor. 6:12)
3. Are my Actions/Choices **Emulating** those of Jesus? (following His model of life/holiness) (1 John 2:6)
4. Are my Actions/Choices setting a godly **Example** to all who are watching me? (1 Tim. 4:12)
5. Are my Actions/Choices demonstrating **Evangelism**, that I am sharing the gospel with my life? (Col. 4:5)
6. Are my Actions/Choices **Edifying** to God’s Church? (1 Cor. 10:23)
7. Are my Actions/Choices **Exalting** to God’s glory in all things? (1 Cor. 10:31)

Community Group Discussion Questions:

1. What decisions have I made in the past unknowingly hurt others, hurt my witness for Christ?
2. What are some practical examples of the extremes of Legalism and License? Which do you tend to?
3. How can the Church today help others to be knowledgeable about common “stumbling blocks?”
4. Is Alcohol still an issue for the Church today as a possible stumbling block? Marijuana? How people dress?
5. How can our community group discuss openly when someone feels there is a problem with another’s choices that may be a stumbling block? How do we show love to those we disagree with?