

Market Place Mayhem

Text: 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13

Back drop: Corinth had the largest public marketplace in Roman world – it was modern, beautiful and completely immoral - To call someone a Corinthian was a four letter slur

This portion of the letter to the Corinthians deals with meat that had been ceremonially offered to idols. Was it right to buy and eat meat that had been consecrated to the gods of Greece, Rome and Egypt?

The Problem – No comparison shopping

In Corinth all animals were butchered sacrificially. A farmer brought his goose or lamb to market and sold it. The butcher had a miniature idol of Zeus or Aphrodite or whoever next to him as he cut the animal's throat and poured its blood in an offering.

It was rote – mindless ritual (the way you used to say the pledge of allegiance in morning homeroom.)

Most people didn't take it seriously but Christians did – it became a question of conscience. “If I buy the meat offered to Zeus am I worshiping him or honoring him?”

Many were afraid that if they ate meat offered to pagan gods they were taking a little of the divinity the idol represented into themselves.

The issue Paul's focus is on the condescending attitude of the so called “mature Christians” toward the younger ones.

They casually accepted invitations to public ceremonial dinners that served sacrificial meats as the main course in honor of the deity.

While laughing off the ignorance of the immature believers and patting themselves on the back for their more enlightened approach

Read Corinthians 8: 1-7

³ The question keeps coming up regarding meat that has been offered up to an idol. Should you attend meals where such meat is served, or not? We sometimes tend to think we know all we need to know to answer these kinds of questions—*but* sometimes our humble hearts can help us more than our proud minds. We never really know enough until we recognize that God alone knows it all.

God can do so much with a humble heart than the person who thinks they know it all.

⁴⁻⁶ Some people say, quite rightly, that idols have no actual existence, that there's nothing to them, that there is no God other than our one God, that no matter how many of these so-called gods are named and worshiped they still don't add up to anything but a tall story. They say—again, quite rightly—that there is only one God the Father, that everything comes from him, and that he wants us to live for him. Also, they say that there is only one Master—Jesus the Messiah—and that everything is for his sake, including us. **Yes. It's true.**

⁷ In strict logic, then, nothing happened to the meat when it was offered up to an idol. It's just like any other meat. I know that, and you know that. But knowing isn't everything. If it becomes everything, some people end up as know-it-alls who treat others as know-nothings. Real knowledge isn't that insensitive.

We need to be sensitive to the fact that we're not all at the same level of understanding in this. Some of you have spent your entire lives eating "idol meat," and are sure that there's something bad in the meat that then becomes something bad inside of you. An imagination and conscience shaped under those conditions isn't going to change overnight.

Paul lays into the logic of the proud

- Of course we can eat that meat - Idols aren't real
- Nothing happens to the meat when its offered up to an idol
- To think you can be contaminated by eating meat offered to them is simply ridiculous

Paul's response: You know that and I know that ... but knowing isn't everything –
Real knowledge, only comes from God who is not insensitive to the needs of others –

Matthew 12: 19 -21 (Isaiah 42) Matthew quoting Isaiah about Jesus

¹⁹ "He will not fight or shout or raise his voice in public. ²⁰ He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. Finally he will cause justice to be victorious. ²¹ And his name will be the hope of all the world." The Message

⇒ Followers of Jesus Christ are all on the same pathway of faith **But** at different stages of development in their journey!

The **starting point** is the same for all of us "...anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Cor 5:17

We all start with a clean slate – but God doesn't throw out our past life and tell us go forget about it. He uses our experiences and personal history – rearranging it, in His hands it becomes new.

Holy Spirit becomes a one on one tutor – and he doesn't rush us He gives each of time to develop

Some things cannot be taught they must be experienced! I can tell you about the love of God but it has no real meaning until you discover and experience it for yourself

☆ Jen and I raised and enjoyed (we can say that now) 3 girls, each one unique and special. Though we tried to treat them all the same, we learned that was impossible, because they each had specific needs and each developed their own coping methods of dealing with us

Erin our youngest believed in the axiom: It's easier to ask forgiveness than permission

At age 2 she started closing her eyes at the dinner table when we had guests – she would not answer any questions thinking if she could not see them – they could not see her

Sometimes we do the same thing as adults thinking if we ignore a problem long enough it will just go away ... not the case with Paul

Even the most brilliant Christians, must admit they don't know all the right answers –

God has provided gifts to the church some in the form of pastors and teachers but we all need the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Read 1Cor 8: 8-9

⁸⁻⁹ But fortunately God doesn't grade us on our diet. We're neither commended when we clean our plate nor reprimanded when we just can't stomach it. But God *does* care when you use your freedom carelessly in a way that leads a fellow believer still vulnerable to those old associations to be thrown off track.

¹⁰ For instance, say you flaunt your freedom by going to a banquet thrown in honor of idols, where the main course is meat sacrificed to idols. Isn't there great danger if someone still struggling over this issue, someone who looks up to you as knowledgeable and mature, sees you go into that banquet? The danger is that he will become terribly confused—maybe even to the point of getting mixed up himself in what his conscience tells him is wrong.

- A Christian whose been delivered from a gambling habit, shouldn't be encouraged to join in a guys night out card game- because there's nothing inherently wrong with playing cards
- A "recovering alcoholic," can't be encouraged kick back and relax with a drink at a dinner party, a ball park or a BBQ!
- Trying to talk someone out of their present conviction of heart so they will see things our way is not our job - unless strictly forbidden by God's Word – let's leave that to the work of the Holy Spirit

Some things on this walk of faith take time

1Cor 8: 11-13

¹¹⁻¹³ Christ gave up his life for that person. Wouldn't you at least be willing to give up going to dinner for him—because, as you say, it doesn't really make any difference? But it *does* make a difference if you hurt your friend terribly, risking his eternal ruin! When you hurt your friend, you hurt Christ. A free meal here and there isn't worth it at the cost of even one of these "weak ones." So, never go to these idol-tainted meals if there's any chance it will trip up one of your brothers or sisters.

Quote: "When you help someone up a hill, you get that much closer to the top yourself." Susan Decuir

Paul was concerned for the, younger Christian welfare but also frustrated with puffed up arrogant minds of the mature believers in Corinth

Where was that agape love – that giving love that they had received when they first believed?

If we open our spiritual eyes God reveals the secrets of our heart to us.