

MEMORY VERSE: “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

This week we study 1 Corinthians 8-10 where Paul continues to address questions he has received, now about idolatry instead of sexual immorality.

1. “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies” (Sun)

- Paul and the Corinthian believers knew the truth about idols.
 - Before Paul reiterates the truth about idols, he warns not to be too confident in knowledge itself because “if anyone thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought” (1 Cor. 8:2).
 - Nevertheless, Paul concedes that “we know that an idol is nothing... and that there is no other God but one” (1 Cor. 8:4).
- Not everyone knows what we know.
 - Though they knew the truth about idols and the “so-called gods” (1 Cor. 8:5) they represent, they also had a responsibility to the “weak.”
 - For the “weak” who didn’t understand this truth, eating food dedicated to idols could be regarded as tolerance of or even participation in idolatry (see 1 Cor. 8:7).
- A Christian’s highest duty is to his brother, not to himself.
 - Carelessly offending a weaker brother would be tantamount to committing a “sin against Christ” (1 Cor. 8:9-12; Mt. 25:31-46).
 - Paul’s counsel is clear: “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1 Cor. 8:13).

2. “Though I am free,” I should be “a servant to all” (Mon)

- The principle of one’s duty to the “weak” in chapter 8 is the predicate for Paul’s explanation in chapter 9 of his rights and responsibilities as a full-time Gospel minister.
 - Paul had the right to receive certain ministry compensations.
 - He had the right to “eat and drink,” “take along a believing wife,” and to “refrain from working” (1 Cor. 9:1-6).

- Christian duty outweighs personal rights. (1 Cor. 9:14, 15-23)
 - Paul’s self-sacrifice reflected the mindset of Jesus (Phil 2).
 - Paul trained his apprentice ministers, like Timothy, accordingly (see Ac. 16:1-3).

As a precautionary measure, Paul wisely advised Timothy to be circumcised—not that God required it, but in order to remove from the minds of the Jews that which might be an objection to Timothy’s ministrations... He desired to bring to his Jewish brethren, as well as to the Gentiles, a knowledge of the gospel, and therefore he sought, so far as was consistent with the faith, to remove every pretext for opposition. AA 204

3. “Flee from idolatry” (Tue, Wed, Thu)

- In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul compares the Christian church to ancient Israel.
 - The Israelites were followers of Christ, too (1 Cor. 10:1-4).
 - Yet their rebellion is a cautionary tale for the church today (vs. 5-11). The lesson is clear: “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12, 13).
- Idolatry is the playground of demons.
 - Paul earlier clarified that idols and their “so-called gods” are nothing to the true God (see 1 Cor. 8:4-6).
 - At the same time, idolatrous customs make us vulnerable to the real evil forces of demons. Thus Christians, even knowing the truth about there being only one true God, should “flee from idolatry” (1 Cor 10:14).
- Christians should “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).
 - This should be the guiding principle for every Christian.
 - Even if something is “lawful” according to knowledge or conscience, we must be sure everything we do honors God and benefits others (1 Cor. 10:23, 24).

CONCLUSION

Paul urged his brethren to ask themselves what influence their words and deeds would have upon others and to do nothing, however innocent in itself, that would seem to sanction idolatry or offend the scruples of those who might be weak in the faith... The apostle’s words of warning to the Corinthian church are applicable to all time and are especially adapted to our day. By idolatry he meant not only the worship of idols, but self-serving, love of ease, the gratification of appetite and passion. AA 316, 17 (Qtly, Fri, par 2,3)