

Bible Study: 1 Cor 8:1-13 Sacrificial Meat

Author: Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ

Audience: the church at Corinth

Date: approximately 56-57 A.D.

Location: Ephesus

Theme: Dealing with a wayward church

Genre: epistle/prose

Outline

Knowledge with love leads to godliness (8:1-3)

We know that an idol is nothing (8:4-6)

But don't become a stumbling block to others (8:7-13)

Observation

God alone is real; idols are fictional gods

Some people don't understand this yet, which creates a problem

Don't encourage a weak brother to do something immoral

Give up your liberty that your brother may not stumble

Interpretation

Didn't the pagans sacrifice unclean animals?

Pagans were known to sacrifice clean and unclean animals. In 1 Cor 8:8, the Greek term for food is *broma*, which refers to that which is eaten. From a biblical point of view, *broma* would imply clean animals by definition if the audience included Israelites and God-fearing Gentiles.

What does 1 Cor 8:8 mean?

1 Cor 8:8 But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse (Lit lacking) if we do not eat, nor the better (Lit abounding) if we do eat.

1 Cor 8:8 is discussing the prohibition against eating meat sacrificed to idols (not clean and unclean meats). Basically, Paul is saying that, in this particular case, food (i.e., that which is biblically permissible) does not affect our standing before God; therefore, Christians are not spiritually inferior (*hustereo*) if they choose not eat nor are they spiritually superior (*perisseuo*) if they do. However, eating meat sacrificed to an idol can negatively impact a brother who is weak in the faith if it encourages him to sin against his conscience. God warned Israel not to participate in pagan religious ceremonies lest they be ensnared in idolatrous worship (Ex 34:15-16, Num 25:1-2).

Ex 34:15 otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,

Ex 34:16 and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons *also* to play the harlot with their gods.

Num 25:1 While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab.

Num 25:2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

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The church ordered Gentile Christians to avoid eating certain items (Acts 15:19-20).

Acts 15:19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles,

Acts 15:20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

At the close of the first century, Jesus rebuked the church for falling into the common gentile practice of eating meat sacrificed to idols and participating in fornication (Rev 2:14, 20).

Rev 2:14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of immorality*.

Rev 2:20 'But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit *acts of immorality* and eat things sacrificed to idols.

In 1 Corinthians 8 & 10, Paul was providing Christians with practical advice on how to live within the unbelieving, Gentile culture of his time:

- Don't eat sacrificial meat inside a pagan temple (1Cor 8:10)
1 Cor 8:10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?
- When you buy meat in the market, don't ask if it is sacrificial meat (1 Cor 10:25)
1 Cor 10:25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake
- If an unbeliever invites you to his house, don't ask where the meat came from (1Cor 10:27)
1 Cor 10:27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.
- If an unbeliever invites you to his house and someone says that the meat is "temple sacrifice," don't eat it because it has become a religious issue (1Cor 10:28)
1 Cor 10:28 But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat *it*, for the sake of the one who informed *you*, and for conscience' sake

Application

An error to avoid: participating in activities that might put Christianity in a bad light