

St. Andrew**Academy**

1 Corinthians: You think you've got problems!

Week 5

Idol Meat



Rule-making

- ❖ It is easy to fall into the trap seeing of 1 Corinthians 7 as a list of rules about sex and marriage.
- ❖ Now in chapter 8, Paul is asked about eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols.
 - We'd expect that he can deal with this quickly. Not eating such meat is one of the few "no's" expressed by the Council that met in Jerusalem in 49AD. (See Acts 15:28-29; Rev 2:14,20; also the *Didache* 6:3)
 - But Paul does not simply say "no." Instead, the next three chapters will revolve around this seemingly simple question.
- ❖ The Christian life is about far more than the keeping of rules. These passages drive home the danger that lies in turning the Bible into a "book of right behavior." Life is far more complex than any set of rules can handle. Most of us don't like it, but there is a lot of ambiguity in life.



Is it knowledge or love? (Chapter 8)

- ❖ Paul has been asked about eating food that has been sacrificed to idols.
- ❖ There are Corinthian Christians who are overemphasizing “knowledge” (*gnosis*).
 - They are secure in their knowledge, wisdom, strength – their general superiority.
 - They know that there are no other gods, so they see no reason why they shouldn’t attend banquets and luncheons in the pagan temples. That is where a lot of the business “networking” of the day took place!
- ❖ Paul acknowledges that, of course, there is only one God – but the issue isn’t about what they know or even what is true, but what is loving.
 - Some newer (less knowledgeable/mature) Christians run the risk of being pulled back into their former ways. Thus, the loving thing for the mature Christians to do is to stay away from the temple luncheons.



From “gnosis” to “agape”

- ❖ Good theology – pastoral, practical theology – is not served by sound-bite answers.
- ❖ Paul is asked a seemingly simple question about food, but his answer is wide-ranging, complex, and completely reframes the question.
 - They want to talk about knowledge, he wants to talk about love. He wants them to shift from *gnosis* to *agape* as the guiding principle for the Christian community.
 - Love entails sacrifice. Christ died for those who might be wounded by the “knowledgeable” Christians. This is another example of how Paul takes nearly every issue to the cross. The Christian life often entails loving sacrifice and the cross is the ultimate expression of loving sacrifice.



Paul gives up his rights! (Chapter 9)

- ❖ As an apostle, Paul has certain rights.
 - The right to being financially supported by the Corinthians, including financial support for the apostles' wives.
 - Such rights are spelled out in Scripture!
- ❖ But Paul has foregone these rights so that he might freely proclaim a free gospel.
 - He is free – but he becomes a Jew for the sake of the Jews and a Gentile for the sake of the Gentiles.
 - Paul has become weak for the sake of the weak!
- ❖ Paul has given up all this, done all this, for the sake of the gospel.
 - Hint! Perhaps the Corinthians could give up their lunches at temple.



A warning against idolatry (10:1-22)

- ❖ The “knowledgeable” Christians in Corinth underestimate the danger they are in!
 - Paul pulls them into Israel's story, reminding them of times when God's people chased after idols were plunged into ruin.
 - “So if you think that you are standing, watch out that you do not fall . . . flee from the worship of idols.”
 - From what should we flee? What peril do we face that we are unaware of? Could such a peril threaten our very salvation?
- ❖ When the “strong” Corinthians go to these temple luncheons they are breaking bread with demons; they are in fellowship (*koinonia*) with the very real powers of evil.
 - They cannot be in *koinonia* with Christ and with the demons.



Using our freedom for the glory of God

- ❖ Balance . . . Balance . . . Balance
 - All our actions should glorify God by seeking to benefit others, not ourselves. This means subordinating our 'rights' to the interests of others.
 - Within that framework, we are free to eat, drink, and do whatever we like with thankfulness.
- ❖ We like simple answers . . . But Paul doesn't provide any!
 - How do we really maintain this delicate balance?
- ❖ What does it mean to imitate Christ?
 - Shaping our lives in accordance with the pattern of Jesus' self-sacrificing love. Paul has done this. So should we.



New Testament Timeline

