

1 Corinthians 8 v 1-13

1 Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that “we all have knowledge” about this issue. But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church. 2 Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn’t really know very much. 3 But the person who loves God is the one whom God recognizes.

4 So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God. 5 There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. 6 But for us,

There is one God, the Father,
by whom all things were created,
and for whom we live.

And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom all things were created,
and through whom we live.

7 However, not all believers know this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their weak consciences are violated. 8 It’s true that we can’t win God’s approval by what we eat. We don’t lose anything if we don’t eat it, and we don’t gain anything if we do.

9 But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. 10 For if others see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, won’t they be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been offered to an idol? 11 So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. 12 And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. 13 So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble.

Questions

Have you ever been superstitious? In what way?

1. Why would some people find eating food which had previously been offered to idols difficult?
2. How can something not be sin for one person but be sin for another?
3. What general principle does Paul apply in verse 9?
4. What could those with “Superior Knowledge” have done to help those who were not comfortable eating food offered to idols?
5. What did Paul mean by verse 2? How should we apply this warning?
6. Regarding verse 3, have there ever been times when we have focussed too much on knowing about God at the expense of being known by God?
7. What might hinder us from loving a newer Christian believer or one who knows the faith less well than we do?
8. How many ways can we think of where exercising our freedom could cause another Christian believer to stumble? How can we best avoid this?

The 16th century Lutheran Theologian RUPERTUS MELDINIUS wrote that in the church there must be, *“Unity in the essentials, freedom in the non-essentials, and love in all things.”* How can we apply that in the church today?