



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 8

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Introduction

- In this chapter and the two to follow, St. Paul addresses the matter of Christians eating things sacrificed to idols
- Though chapter 10, he will conclude with specific warnings (10:18-33), he begins by arguing on the basis of the supremacy of love over knowledge (1-3)
- While some might have correct knowledge but all might not, and it would be very easy by an abuse of "liberty" to cause those with weak consciences to stumble (4-10)
- Such would be a serious offense, even against Christ, prompting St. Paul to say how far he would go to avoid causing a brother to stumble (11-13)



Supremacy of Love (8:1-3)

- As touching things offered to idols. Corinth, like all Greek cities, was full of temples to heathen idols
- At their altars victims were constantly sacrificed, the flesh of which was afterwards eaten
- The question arose whether a Christian could eat of such flesh without the sin of showing respect to an idol
- Perhaps the letter to St. Paul had asked about this matter (1 Cor 7:1)



Supremacy of Love (8:1-3)

- Some pleaded their knowledge that an idol was nothing (1 Cor 8:4), not divine in any sense
- St. Paul tells them that the question is one, not of knowledge, but of love
- Knowledge without love gives occasion of vanity and pride
- Love cares and edifies the neighbor
- Knowledge only says, all things are lawful for me; love adds, but all things do not edify



Supremacy of Love (8:1-3)

- If anyone is inflated with a sense of knowledge, he has not got on the right track for true knowledge
- The first step to knowledge is to know our own ignorance
- Without love there is only the appearance of knowledge
- Love is a source of true knowledge
- To love God is to know Him; and he who thus knows God has been first known by God

Love Cares For The Weak (8:4-10)



- We know that an idol is nothing, not a god, not even a living being; only wood, stone, or metal
- Heaven (as the sun, moon, and stars)
- Earth (as deified kings, beasts)
- Also angels and men in authority are termed gods as exercising a divinely delegated power
- To us: believers
- From whom as Creator all things derive their existence

Love Cares For The Weak (8:4-10)



- We for Him: God the Father is the end for whom believers live
- One Lord contrasted with the "many lords" of heathendom (1 Cor 8:5)
- Through whom are all things - Created, sustained, and governed
- And we live through Him, having access to the Father, and all spiritual blessings
- Not everybody has this knowledge

Love Cares For The Weak (8:4-10)



- There were some could not realize that an idol was nothing (1 Cor 8:4)
- To them, meat that came from idol sacrifice was unlawful to be eaten
- Weak conscience: not rightly informed
- Is defiled: contracts guilt by doing it
- Meat neither presents us as commended nor as disapproved before God: it does not affect our standing before God

Love Cares For The Weak (8:4-10)



- An anticipation of an objection: why then will we therefore be deprived of our liberty?
- Although you abstain for your brethren's sake, you will lose no part of Christianity
- Also if you receive the food, it will make you in no way the more holy
- To offend our brethren is an abuse of liberty
- The true liberty is that we should have consideration of our weak brethren

Love Cares For The Weak (8:4-10)



- A stumbling-block, the occasion of the fall of those who were not so well informed
- If a weaker Christian should see a stronger one, a leader, sitting at such a banquet, this would lead him to believe that he was honoring the idol
- The example would encourage idolatry
- Emboldened: literally, "built up."
- We ought to built up one another in good and not in bad to violate one's conscience



Do Not Offend (8:11-13)

- Through your knowledge, the knowledge that made him dare to eat, you might destroy the weak brother by leading him to idolatry
- Christ died for your weak brother to save him
- So such offending of our weak brethren, results in the offending of Christ Himself
- To stumble: to sin and fall
- Love, in this case, would demand that the meat be given up



Do Not Offend (8:11-13)

- Some Christians can, perhaps drink wine or beer, knowing that all things are lawful
- The example of these will lead the weak to engage in alcoholism, and hence that example will lead them to spiritual death
- The Christian principle, the rule of love, is, if eating meat, or doing any activity, causes my brother to sin, I will not do such things while the world stands



Conclusion

- What is the danger of knowledge?
- What is the power of love?
- What attribute is important in regards to knowledge?
- How can one abuse their liberty in Christ?
- What happens if we sin against our brothers?
- How far should we be willing to go out of consideration for our brethren who are weak in faith?