

Eating Meats Offered To Idols

"Now concerning the things sacrificed to idols; we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (1 Cor. 8:1).

Among the questions the Corinthians had written Paul about was whether it was right to eat meats offered in sacrifice to idols. Many of these brethren had once been idolaters (cf. 6:9-11). Their question was not whether an idol was anything or not; they *"knew an idol was nothing;"* they wanted to know whether that since possessing that knowledge, they could eat, without sin, meats offered as sacrifices to an idol.

When one studies this chapter he is impressed with the number of times various forms of *"knowledge"* appears. At least eleven times the word *"know," "knoweth," "knowledge,"* or *"known"* appears. Those who questioned Paul about the rightness of eating meats sacrificed to idols, affirmed *"we know that we all have knowledge."* What these brethren failed to comprehend was that their own personal possession of knowledge blinded them to the truth that their *"all"* was too broad, for, as the apostle clearly showed *"all"* did not possess knowledge. These brethren failed to take into account that knowledge could lead to the sin of pride and further that *"knowledge"* but brings increased responsibilities to act in such a way that one does not lead someone else to sin because of a liberty to act in a certain way (vss. 9-11).

Idolatry has been the downfall of God's people through the ages. God stated to Israel that they were to *"have no other gods before me;"* that *"thou shalt not make unto a likeness of anything in the heaven or earth"* (Ex. 20:3f). Yet while Moses was still on the mount receiving the law, compromising Aaron had bent to Israel's wishes and fashioned a golden calf for them to worship (Ex. 22:1-6). When Balaam was unable to curse Israel, he was able, through counsel to Balak, to bring about the death of 24,000 Israelites by advising the Moabites to invite the Israelites to join in the worship of their god, Baalpeor (Num. 25:1-9). Again and again Israel worshipped Canaanite gods and brought disaster to Israel (Judges 2:11-13). The "break-away" ten tribes soon were offered "gods" by Jeroboam, to whom they eagerly tendered worship despite the many, many years of worship of Jehovah, familiarity with the commands forbidding idolatry and the making of images; they forsook all that and during the 300 years (more or less) of parallel existence with southern Judah, they never had a king who was a true worshipper of Jehovah. Judah did little better. Some of her kings tolerated the worship of idols, some ever became devout worshippers of them, offering their own children as sacrifices. Even today idolatry continues to

plague God's people -- covetousness, gold, egotism -- all are very much in evidence among us and all are forms of idolatry.

We do not have "*idol's temples*" on every corner in the United States as was seen in Corinth. Occasionally we may see "*graven images*," supposedly of Jesus, Mary, or one of the "saints" such as might be seen in Catholic shrines and buildings (all which was forbidden by the law); but the principles involving "*liberty*" and "*conscience*" are very important to inculcate into our hearts. Those same principles are dealt with by the apostle in Romans 14, which misapplications thereof have wrought havoc among the people of God during the last three or four decades.

So, let us learn the intended lessons the Holy Spirit desired us to learn from 1 Corinthians 8. Let us learn that love for God and love for our neighbor will temper our actions, causing us to forgo certain "rights" (liberties) we have for the common good of all.

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