

“More than *Meats the Eye*” (1 Corinthians 8:1-13)

Washington State allows motorists to make a right turn when the traffic signal is red—if the way is clear. This gives drivers liberty and keeps traffic moving. At some intersections, however, signs read, “No turn on red.” These corners are exceptions because they are potential danger spots. By turning on red at one of these intersections, a motorist could cause a serious accident.

Similarly, in the Christian life we have been given great freedom, yet there are certain potential danger spots that can cause a serious accident between brothers and sisters in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 8, we have a dangerous intersection concerning meat offered to idols.¹ Paul had perfect freedom to eat meat offered to idols.² He knew that there was only one true God and that idols were nothing. Eating meat offered to them was neither right nor wrong. But not all believers felt that way. A person who had a weak conscience believed that the meat was defiled by the idol, and therefore it was off limits. Paul recognized the need to take special care, lest by eating he would influence such a person to eat, thus violating his conscience. Concern for weaker believers kept him from exercising his liberty.

As Christians, we are free in Christ—free to engage in social practices and customs not specifically forbidden by biblical commands. Yet, the Holy Spirit may prompt us to refrain from some legitimate practices. Then the principle of love must take precedence over the principle of liberty. A mature Christian will heed the “no turn on red” sign to keep from causing a weaker believer “to have a serious accident.”³ In 1 Cor 8:1-13, Paul will explain that we are not only responsible for ourselves but for one another. To put a spin on the words of Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9), Paul will insist, “*You are your brother’s keeper.*” You do have a responsibility to look out for your brother’s welfare. With this high calling in mind, Paul lays out two principles to guide us.

1. Recognize that love is more important than freedom (8:1-6). Whether Christians should eat meat which had been offered to idols was a pressing question in the church at Corinth. For Paul, however, the more important question was how such issues were dealt with by the church. It had become a matter of pride on both sides of the question, so Paul begins at that point.⁴ In 8:1-3, Paul rebukes the Corinthians’ pride and insists that love trumps knowledge. He begins his argument with these words: “**Now concerning things sacrificed to idols,⁵ we know that we all⁶ have knowledge⁷**” (8:1a). The phrase “now concerning” clues us into the fact that Paul is once again responding to issues raised by the Corinthians in a previous letter. “We know that we all have knowledge” probably represents another Corinthian slogan (cf. 7:1).⁸ Some in Corinth were justifying their position by claiming a certain knowledge that idols were only things of human manufacture and did not represent any true reality (8:4).⁹

In 8:1b, Paul grants the fact that believers can champion this knowledge, but such knowledge can easily lead to pride and arrogance.¹⁰ Paul puts it like this, “**Knowledge¹¹ makes arrogant, but love edifies.**”¹² This is one of the most powerful one-liners about Christian community found anywhere in Paul’s letters.¹³ Paul’s point is: Those Corinthians that are boasting of their freedom to eat meat sacrificed to idols are acting arrogantly, without demonstrating love and respect for their brothers and sisters. Yet the real aim of Christianity should not be knowledge but love. Knowledge apart from love makes one prideful.¹⁴ Hence, we must always be cautious. A famous preacher used to say, “Some Christians grow; others just swell.”¹⁵

Are you “puffed up”¹⁶ in your knowledge? Do you look down on others who don’t know as much as you do? Paul tells you to recognize that “love edifies.” The word translated “edifies” means “to build up.” Originally, the word was used of the formation of buildings. However, Paul uses this word figuratively throughout his letters to describe the development of Christian character.¹⁷ The Christian life isn’t how much you know, or how strong you are, or how much Christian liberty you possess, but how much you love. *You are your brother’s keeper.*

One of the dangers of being a Bible fellowship is that we may be strong in knowledge but weak in love. Francis Schaeffer once said, “If we do not show love to one another, the world has a right to question whether Christianity is true.” Therefore, we must strive to remain humble at all times and manifest love to all that we come in contact with. *You are your brother’s keeper.*

Paul continues his challenging words in 8:2-3: **“If anyone supposes that he knows¹⁸ anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.”** The grammar in this sentence assumes that this is a present problem in the church at Corinth.¹⁹ The force of the verb tenses in 8:2 suggests a paraphrase: “If a person thinks that he has attained to some degree of knowledge, he has not yet reached the stage when he has any knowledge at all in the real sense of the word.”²⁰ Paul is simply saying that if we think we are all knowing, we can be confident that we are not.

In 1692, Harvard College adopted as its motto *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae*—“Truth for Christ and the Church.” Its crest showed three books, one face down to symbolize the limitation of human knowledge. But in recent decades that book has been turned face up to represent the unlimited capacity of the human mind. And the motto has been changed to *Veritas*—“Truth.” The pursuit of knowledge is praiseworthy, yet learning can quickly lead to pride and a refusal to acknowledge any limits on our mental abilities. When that happens, biblical truth is ignored or rejected.²¹

Our knowledge as finite human beings is never final—we can always know more and achieve deeper insights. Socrates once said, “Knowledge is proud that it knows so much; wisdom is humble that it knows no more.” The truly wise person clearly grasps how very limited his knowledge and understanding is, even in respect to the grey areas.

Paul adds a very unusual comment to 8:3: **“but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.”** Again, the grammar makes it clear that there are those in Corinth who love God.²² Paul prioritizes love over knowledge. Accumulating all the facts about God that one can will not result in the most realistic knowledge of Him. One must also love God.²³ If a person loves God, then God knows him in an intimate way and reveals Himself to him (2:10). Consequently, it is really more important that God knows us than that we know Him.²⁴ When He knows us intimately, He will enable us to know Him intimately.²⁵ Logically, not only will God enable those who love Him to know Him better, but He will also enable those who love Him to understand other subjects as well. Paul said this to establish the priority of love over knowledge in determining our behavior in various situations.²⁶ *You are your brother’s keeper.*

In 8:4-6, Paul resumes his discussion of knowledge after digressing briefly in 8:2 and 3 to comment on the superiority of love over knowledge. In these three verses, Paul will staunchly argue against idols and put forth a profound understanding of God. He writes, **“Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol²⁷ in the world, and that there is no God but one.²⁸ For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”²⁹** The expressions “there is no such thing as an idol” and “there is no God but one” (8:4) are slogans the Corinthians apparently used to justify their behavior.³⁰ Paul agrees with the slogans in part, but corrects them to show how the Corinthians have misused these ideas. He explains that even though idols are fictitious gods, nevertheless, people ascribe worship to them (8:5). Yet, Paul reminds the Corinthians that there is only one God worthy of worship—God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The way the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are spoken of together here is a clear indication of the deity of Christ. Calling Jesus “Lord” is a way of affirming His deity and oneness with Yahweh (cf. Phil 2:11).³¹ Hence, Paul is arguing that in the same way that the Godhead is one, we should seek to be one in the body of Christ. This requires understanding that love is more important than freedom, because *you are your brother’s keeper.*

[The heart of Paul's argument, especially as it relates to Christian community, comes in 8:7-13. Even though, at least in theory, all members of the Corinthian church understand that idols have no real existence (8:1), many are unable to put this knowledge into practice. Old links between idol food and idols are impossible to forget.³²]

2. Limit your freedom for the sake of love (8:7-13). In this section, Paul will challenge us to look out for our brothers and sisters because we love them and have their best spiritual interest at heart. In 8:7-8, Paul writes, **“However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed³³ to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience³⁴ being weak is defiled.⁸ But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.”** The weak Christians in Corinth felt it was a sin to eat meat sacrificed to idols. Because of their upbringing, earlier habits, or former lifestyle, the weak still believed that they were participating in idol worship by eating the meat. The Bible suggests that some in Corinth could not shake their past.³⁵ As believers in Jesus Christ, we must be sensitive to our spiritual brothers and sisters. We must learn to defer to them when it is appropriate. For, in the end, what difference does it really make whether we eat or not?

However, Paul does have a word of warning in 8:9: **“But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.”** The phrase “take care” is a command that we must continually obey. Christ's interest in the weaker brother is greater than His interest in you exercising your freedom.³⁶ Paul acknowledges that we have “liberty” in Christ. Christian liberty is one of the central truths of the New Testament (John 8:31-32, 36; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 5:1). Yet, it is possible to use our liberty and become a “stumbling block” to the weak.³⁷ A “stumbling block” is not an act that offends a person; it is an act that leads a fellow believer into what is sin for him or her. A stumbling block is not just anything that causes someone to be offended. It is not a stumbling block for a man to have long hair and a ponytail, if the people who are offended by this are not thereby tempted to have a ponytail themselves, and in so doing violate their conscience. It cannot be a stumbling block when a woman is offended at a man's beard, unless she is tempted to grow a beard and in doing so would violate her conscience.³⁸

Practically speaking, there are number of illustrations that come to mind. I really enjoy Asian food. Yet, over the course of my life, I have entered into various Asian restaurants only to find idols. Now I recognize that these idols are nothing; however, I would not take a new Christian who had been saved out of Buddhism or Hinduism to such a restaurant. Ever since I was a little boy, I have enjoyed watching boxing and marital arts. I have the freedom to watch this, but other Christians may not. I need to be loving and respectful. If I sense this activity goes against a fellow believer's conscience, I should refrain from talking about this subject in their presence.³⁹ I should also not invite them to participate in this activity with me. *I am my brother's keeper.*

Paul now illustrates his point in 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 strengthened⁴⁰ to eat things sacrificed to idols?”** The “knowledge” that Paul is referring to goes back to 8:1-4. Strong believers know that there is only one God (8:4). Weak believers are influenced by their past. Thus, strong believers are to act lovingly toward other believers, even weak ones, superstitious ones, legalistic ones, ascetic ones, or baby ones!⁴¹

Let's consider another scenario. Do I have the biblical freedom to stock my refrigerator with *Bud Light*? The answer is “yes.” However, what would happen if a young man in our church was visiting at my home and when I opened the fridge he saw a case of beer? After seeing my stash, he might think to himself, “Well, if Pastor Keith drinks freely, then maybe I can too.” Yet, what if this young man comes from a family of alcoholics and has determined he doesn't have the freedom to drink? My example could have a disastrous effect on him.⁴² In the end, I choose to abstain from this biblical freedom for the sake of others. *I am brother's keeper.*

In 8:11-12, Paul shares these disturbing words: **“For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.⁴³ And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.”⁴⁴** By partaking in an activity I may have the freedom to enjoy, I can potentially “ruin” my brother.⁴⁵ Paul does not mean ultimate spiritual destruction, for he calls this man a “brother, for whose sake Christ died.”⁴⁶ The destruction for the weak brother is that he reverts to his old pagan ways.⁴⁷ The stress is on weakening the faith and ruining the Christian life of the brother,⁴⁸ or stunting his Christian life and usefulness. Paul takes this seriously and states that this is a sin against Christ!⁴⁹ *You are your brother’s keeper.*

Paul concludes this chapter by using himself as an example. The point being: We need to remember that there is something more important than our freedom to do as we please. That something is the spiritual development of other people. In 8:13, Paul writes, **“Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”⁵⁰** What a Christlike attitude! He exhorts us by example, “Don’t look at *your* freedom; look at *their* need.” Our first concern should not be to exercise our freedom to the limit, but to care about the welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ.⁵¹ There is an emphasis on the term “brother,” which occurs four times in the last three verses. *You are your brother’s keeper.*

You say, “I thought so! I knew there was a catch. I knew no pastor would tell me I can chew tobacco and play slot machines if I want to. This Christian freedom one hears so much about is just a bunch of words. It’s phony.” No, it’s not just a bunch of words. Our freedom in Christ is real. But like many possessions in life, its greatest use comes when it is given away. What is the highest use you make of your income? It is not the paying of bills or the saving of some or the investing of some. Rather, it is the giving of a portion of it to the Lord. And what is the highest use a man can make of his freedom in Christ? It may be to give a portion of it up for the sake of Christ.

You say, “If I have to give something up once I have it, I might as well not have it in the first place.” Not at all. Is the person who earns \$25,000 and keeps it all for himself as well off as the person who earns \$40,000 and gives \$15,000 away? They both have \$25,000 left, but I would argue that the latter person is infinitely more wealthy. You see, you can’t give something away unless you’ve got it, and you can’t receive the blessing of giving unless you voluntarily surrender something that was really yours.

The Bible places the burden on the strong. The sin is not in exercise of your liberty, but in exercising your liberty at the expense of fellow believers. If somebody else might be hurt spiritually, a strong Christian should give up the freedom to participate. The highest principle governing my choice in disputable matters is love for a fellow believer who might disagree with me on that issue.⁵²

There are two extremes when it comes to nonessential issues. One extreme is *license*: If the Bible does not prohibit a practice then there is freedom under grace to participate. The other extreme is *legalism*: A judgmental certainty about these issues that demands total abstinence.⁵³ We must educate younger and older believers in the body of Christ so that they can learn what true Christian liberty is. We must also train believers to not cause other brothers and sisters to stumble.

Giving up my freedoms sounds like I live a boring, joyless life—I may never enjoy my liberties in Christ because somebody might be hurt. Paul’s teaching requires that I defer to those who may be close by or to those who may see my actions and be hurt by them. If I deferred to all Christians everywhere, I probably would not even get out of bed in the morning! On every doubtful issue there is a weak Christian somewhere who believes my actions or ideas are sinful. It is unlikely that they all attend my church or are in my circle of acquaintances. My responsibility is to love those nearby who disagree with me and to respect the consciences of other Christians with whom I come in contact.⁵⁴

Freedom and discipline have come to be regarded as mutually exclusive, when in fact freedom is not at all the opposite, but the final reward of discipline. It is to be bought with a high price, not merely claimed.... The [professional] skater and [race] horse are free to perform as they do only because they have been subjected to countless hours of grueling work, rigidly prescribed, faithfully carried out. Men are free to soar into space because they have willingly confined themselves in a tiny capsule designed and produced by highly trained scientists and craftsmen, have meticulously followed instructions, and submitted themselves to rules which others defined.⁵⁵

Perhaps you are thinking, “Aren’t there some Christians who just sit on the sidelines taking potshots at other Christians, trying to find some fault?” Yes, there are. In fact, I know some, even in this church. “Do you mean that I have to limit my liberty for legalists like that?” No. Paul is talking about an action which might cause a weaker brother to *stumble*, not just make a pharisaical Christian *frown*. If we governed our entire lives by the frowns we receive from legalistic Christians, we’d be living in straightjackets indeed.

But distinguishing between the legalist and the weak brother is sometimes very difficult. Discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and only He can make known in any given case what an individual ought to do. We desperately need, in the words of Heb 5:14, “to have our senses trained to discern good and evil.” God does not ask us to give up our liberty to the legalist. But if a weak brother is sincerely trying to grow, he deserves every sacrifice we might make. *We are our brother’s keeper.*

In July 2005, Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, was asked by ESPN reporter Andrea Kremer to explain his decision to ride his motorcycle without a helmet. Roethlisberger response was, “I don’t wear a helmet because I don’t have to. It’s not the law. If it was the law, I’d definitely have one on every time I rode. But it’s not the law and I know I don’t have to. You’re just more free when you’re out there with no helmet on.”

Unfortunately, Roethlisberger was involved in a serious motorcycle accident in June of 2006, less than one year later. A 62-year-old woman failed to yield at a Pittsburgh intersection and Roethlisberger was thrown into the windshield of her Chrysler Town and Country. His bike was totaled, and emergency surgeons spent over seven hours repairing a broken jaw, a fractured skull, missing teeth, and several other facial injuries.

After being released from the hospital, Roethlisberger apologized to the fans, his family, and his team for risking his health (and life) unnecessarily. In another interview, he was no longer focused on taking advantage of his individual freedom: “In the past few days, I’ve gained a new perspective on life. By the grace of God, I’m fortunate to be alive.” He also added that, if he ever does ride a motorcycle again, “It will certainly be with a helmet.”⁵⁶

Roethlisberger, who happens to be a Christian, had the freedom to ride his motorcycle without a helmet. Yet, he endangered his life and potentially many other lives. What do I mean? Well if Ben Roethlisberger, the youngest quarterback to ever win a Super Bowl doesn’t need to wear a helmet, why should I? I’m sure many people watched this interview on ESPN and considered this freedom.

Spiritually speaking, beware of repeating this type of mistake and leading a brother or sister into sin. *You are your brother’s keeper.*

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Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Acts 15:28-29; 21:20-25
Matthew 18:5-6
Matthew 22:37-39
2 Timothy 1:5
1 John 4:11, 19-21
Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Study Questions

1. When have I used my knowledge to build up my fellow Christians (8:1)? What was the response? How have I sought to guard myself from pride and exemplify humility? Do I strive to balance my knowledge with Christlike love?
2. Why is love for Christ and His people more important than knowledge (8:2-3)? Is Paul opposed to knowledge? Why or why not? How can I have the best of both worlds (i.e., knowledge and love)?
3. Why is theology so important to Paul (8:4-6)? Should theology be important to me? If so, to what degree? How can I learn theology and directly apply it to my life?
4. What non-essential issue has stirred up my emotions most, to say it must be wrong for Christians (8:7-13)? When and how did this issue develop as a conviction for me? Can I describe a life experience that caused me conflict on this issue?
5. Whose responsibility is it to give in (or defer) to the other when Christians disagree on a neutral issue? What sin am I presently struggling with, that could “ruin” a brother (8:11)? How can I learn to be more sensitive to my fellow Christians? How can a weaker Christian become strong in relation to a certain issue?

Notes

¹ In the first century, thrifty church members saved money by purchasing marked-down meat in the market. Some church people later discovered that the meat was marked down because it had been used in the ritual worship of pagan deities in the city. Now what? Reaction was split. Some Christians refused to buy it. Others had no problem with the bargain meat.

Meat used in ritual worship was apparently divided three ways: one part was burned on the altar; another part was given to the pagan priest; and the third part was given to the one who brought it as an offering and who believed that the gods enjoyed the aroma of the burning meat. Leftovers not used by the priest were then marked down and sold at a substantial discount in the local market where it could be purchased by the people. The one who had brought the offering might also have served a portion to Christian friends at a dinner party.

The urgent questions were: Should Christians buy the marked-down meat? Should they serve it to guests? The believers of the city of Corinth disagreed. See John Wecks, *Free to Disagree: Moving Beyond the Arguments Over Christian Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 46.

Garland notes, "In the Greek city of Corinth, religion was present in all the different levels of social life. In the ancient world, people did not compartmentalize their religious, economic, and social lives." David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 349.

² Paul Van Gorder notes, "God's judgment came upon Israel, as recorded in Numbers 25, not only because they ate meat sacrificed to idols, but also because they had engaged in idolatry. Even the twelve apostles had forbidden the eating of such meat (Acts 15). But fuller revelation given to Paul had brought a new liberty to him and to those who heard his teaching. They knew an idol had no substance or being. Therefore, meat was not profaned if offered to an idol, and, for the stronger brother, it remained the God's pure gift." See Paul R. Van Gorder, *The Church Stands Corrected* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, 1976), 68.

³ This has been adapted and revised and *Our Daily Bread* illustrations:
http://preceptaustin.org/1_corinthians_commentaries_3.htm.

⁴ John Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 535.

⁵ The word translated "food sacrificed to idols" (*eidolothutos*) appears to have been a Greek word coined in Christian circles in the first century, precisely because of concern over the issue of how to handle food that had been offered to idols. Verlyn D. Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians" in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

⁶ Garland notes, "All Christians possess knowledge, but not all Christians know as they are meant to know. Knowledge can be incomplete and/or misapplied." David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 368.

⁷ "Knowledge" (*gnosis*) is the key word in this chapter—five of 10 occurrences of the word in the letter appear here (see 1 Cor 8:1 (twice), 7, 10, 11; cf. 1:5; 12:8; 13:2, 8; 14:6).

⁸ See NET. The NIV footnote suggests ("We all possess knowledge, as you say"). This may also be (1) a quote from the letter that the Corinthian church wrote to Paul or (2) a quote from Paul's earlier preaching that the Corinthian church had misunderstood.

⁹ Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians."

¹⁰ Paul has already dealt with this issue at several points in this letter (see 1:29, 31; 3:21; 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2, 6).

¹¹ The amount of corrective instruction concerning knowledge in this epistle makes clear that the Corinthian Christians valued knowledge too highly. Fee notes, "True *gnosis* ['knowledge'] consists not in the accumulation of so much data, nor even in the correctness of one's theology, but in the fact that one has learned to live in love toward all." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 368.

¹² I like J.B. Phillips' translation of 1 Cor 8:11b: "While knowledge may make a man look big or act like a know-it-all, love builds into people beautiful qualities of Christian character."

¹³ Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Breaking Barriers: The Possibilities of Christian Community in a Lonely World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002), 91.

¹⁴ The stumbling block action is taken in a spirit of pride, arrogance, and selfish independence. It is a deliberate flaunting of Christian liberty, at the expense of others. The stumbling block issue is as much a matter of the offender's attitude as his actions.

¹⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Wise* (Wheaton: Victor, 1988).

¹⁶ The Greek verb "makes arrogant" (*phusioo*) literally means "to puff or blow up" and always has negative connotations. The verb also occurs in 1 Cor 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 13:4; cf. Col 2:8.

¹⁷ E.g., 1 Cor 10:23; 14:3, 5, 12, 26; 2 Cor 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Rom 14:19; 15:2; Eph 4:12, 29; 1 Thess 5:11.

¹⁸ Thiselton writes, “The use of the perfect infinitive (*egnokenai*) signifies that the Corinthians, or some of them, perceive themselves as having achieved a present state of ‘having come to know,’ i.e., having achieved knowledge. By contrast the ingressive use of the aorist (*egno*) represents Paul’s correction: he or she has not yet come to know. The aorist infinitive *gnonai*, which follows *kathos dei* (as it is necessary, or as they ought), expands the contrast.” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

¹⁹ The word “if” (*ei*) forms a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from Paul’s perspective.

²⁰ Paul Ellingworth and Howard Hatton, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1985), 160.

²¹ Our Daily Bread, “The Truth About Truth” (Grand Rapids: RBC Ministries, July 15, 2004): <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-07-15-04.shtml>.

²² This is another first-class condition in the Greek text (cf. 1 Cor 8:2).

²³ Blomberg notes, “True Christian knowledge is inseparable from *agape* love, which can be produced only by God’s prior choice to love us (8:3).” Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 161.

²⁴ Cf. 2 Tim 2:19. See also Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1990), 122.

²⁵ Barrett makes this insightful comment “...If a man loves God, this is a sign that God has taken the initiative.” C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians: Harper’s New Testament Commentaries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 190.

²⁶ Thomas L. Constable: *Notes on 1 Corinthians*: 2005 edition:

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1corinthians.pdf>,

²⁷ Exegetes and grammarians are divided over whether *ouden eidolon* should be construed as attributive (“no idol [exists]”) or as predicative (“an idol is nothing...”).

²⁸ God regularly mocks “idols.” One of the best examples is Psalm 115:3-8: “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of man’s hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; they have eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but they cannot hear; they have noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but they cannot feel; they have feet, but they cannot walk; they cannot make a sound with their throat. Those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them.” See also 2 Chron 13:9; Isa 37:19; 41:29; Jer 2:11; Acts 14:15; Gal 4:8.

²⁹ “The Father is the source and goal of all things whereas the Son is the agent through whom all things have come from God and will return to God. Since Paul’s point was the unity of the Godhead, there was no need to complicate matters by referring to the Holy Spirit here.” Constable: *Notes on 1 Corinthians*.

³⁰ The NET puts these slogans in quotes for the ease of the reader.

³¹ Although Paul does not use *Theos* (“God”) for Jesus in this context, he does use it of Jesus in Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; and Titus 2:13; and *Theostetus* in Col 2:9. See Dr. Bob Utley, “1-2 Corinthians”: <http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/pdf/VOL06.pdf>, 102.

³² Vander Broek, *Breaking Barriers*, 92.

³³ A rare word in the NT, occurring only here, 11:16, and in John 18:39. Wecks writes, “The word ‘accustomed’ highlights one of the key reasons for the heated debate on neutral things such as buying and eating marked-down meat to every person has woven into their living patterns, habits, and belief systems that make up their emotional fiber. Sometimes a dramatic event can burn a person emotionally. The personal convictions that the person feels in his or her core are covered with emotional scars. He or she remains emotionally tender if the same issue resurfaces later.” John Wecks, *Free to Disagree: Moving Beyond the Arguments Over Christian Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 49.

³⁴ Paul uses the term “conscience” (*suneidesis*) often in the books of 1-2 Corinthians (1 Cor 4:4; 8:7, 10, 12; 10:25, 27, 28, 29; 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2; 5:11).

³⁵ Wecks, *Free to Disagree*, 49.

³⁶ Richard L. Ganz, *20 Controversies that Almost Killed a Church: Paul’s Counsel to the Corinthians and the Church Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 132.

³⁷ Paul argued that if weaker believers feel in some way that a connection to an idol is offensive, then respect that, without making them feel foolish. It is not right to encourage someone to do something bad that his conscience tells him he shouldn’t do. The conscience should be respected. There is a danger that ignoring one’s conscience could lead to doing other things that are wrong, things that are not indifferent but are sin. There is a time, however, to

educate his conscience and teaching which matters are definite and which matters can be decided by each individual. Ganz, *20 Controversies that Almost Killed a Church*, 130.

³⁸ Randy Alcorn, *Eternal Perspectives Newsletter*, Spring 2000, page 10. See also Jack Kuhatschek, *Taking the Guesswork out of Applying the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 69-70.

³⁹ Someone is always watching you. If you doubt that, just stumble and fall on the street and see how many people seemingly come from nowhere and congregate around you. Make sure of this, believer, you are being observed by other Christians. Van Gorder, *The Church Stands Corrected*, 70.

⁴⁰ This is the same Greek word used in 1 Cor 8:1b. It is used ironically here: The weak person is “strengthened” or “built up” to commit what he regards as sin.

⁴¹ Utley, “1-2 Corinthians,” 103.

⁴² According to a paper published in the Journal of Drug Issues in 2006, younger siblings whose older siblings drink are twice as likely to pick up the habit. When it comes to smoking, the risk increases fourfold. Preaching Today citation: Jeffrey Kluger, “The New Science of Siblings,” *Time magazine* (7-10-06), p. 52.

⁴³ It is to be noted that the death of Christ is said to have occurred “because of” the Corinthian “brother.” The Greek behind “because of” (*dia* + the accusative) spelling out deliberate purpose. In fact, 8:11 is the only place in the NT where it is said that Christ died “because of” an individual (but cf. Rom. 4:25; 1 Peter 1:20).

⁴⁴ “To sin against the brethren means nothing less than to sin against Christ (a lesson brought home to Paul long since on the Damascus road, Acts 9:4f).” Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 128. Cf. also Gal 4:14.

⁴⁵ The word “ruin” (*apollutai*, present tense of *apollumi*, “destroy”) refers to spiritual weakness and destruction. The terms “ruined,” “perish,” or “destroyed” must be interpreted in light of Rom 14:22-23, where it means “causing another to sin.”

⁴⁶ Christ died “because of” this “brother,” a man who had been “bought with a price” (6:20; 7:23), who had been “sanctified” (6:11) and who would be preserved “to the end” (1:8). Therefore, the functioning idolater is a child of God, one who by definition cannot forfeit his salvation.

⁴⁷ David W.J. Gill, “1 Corinthians” in *Zondervan Illustrated Biblical Background Commentary: Vol 3 Romans to Philemon*, ed. by Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 145.

⁴⁸ Eaton writes, “It does not mean he goes to hell (‘destroyed’ or ‘ruined’ has quite a weak meaning here), but it does mean the Holy Spirit is grieved and the believer’s freedom in prayer is damaged. Until such a person sorts himself out and finds restoration, forgiveness and freedom, he is in a bad state—just because he was pushed by a ‘strong’ Christian into damaging his conscience.” Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: 1 Corinthians 1-9* (Kent, England, 1998), 110.

⁴⁹ “To sin against the brethren means nothing less than to sin against Christ (a lesson brought home to Paul long since on the Damascus road, Acts 9:4f)” Morris, *1 Corinthians*, . Cf. also Gal 4:14.

⁵⁰ Paul practiced what he preached. “Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, ‘Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day’” (Acts 23:1) and “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men” (Acts 24:16).

⁵¹ Michael P. Andrus, “Freedom Has Its Limits” (1 Cor 8:1-13): unpublished sermon, 3/25/2001.

⁵² Weeks, *Free to Disagree*, 51.

⁵³ Charlie Bing, “Making Right Choices in Questionable Issues,” *Grace Notes*,” no. 7.

⁵⁴ Weeks, *Free to Disagree*, 52.

⁵⁵ Preaching Today citation: Elisabeth Elliot in All That Was Ever Ours. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 32, no. 16.

⁵⁶ Preaching Today citation: David Slagle, Atlanta, Georgia; source: ESPN.com.