

Series, "Gospel Community: Living Together in Liberty"

1 Corinthians 8:1-3

I. Introduction

A. So far

1. In unity (1 Corinthians 1-4)
2. In purity (1 Corinthians 5-7)
3. Resurrection thread throughout

B. Today: living together in liberty

1. Next five weeks, how do we as Jesus followers recognize and express our freedom in Christ in the context of life within Gospel community?
2. Prescribed, prohibited, and permissible
 - a. Prescribed: Things we are called to do; all who follow Jesus; love one another, pursue unity with the body, pursue purity with one another, etc.
 - b. Prohibited: Things Scripture clearly teaches against; sexual immorality, being drunk, taking advantage of others, etc.
 - c. Permissible
 - 1) Allowed but not obligatory; optional
 - 2) Gospel community: thoughts and actions that we have freedom to do while we lovingly consider their impact on others who participate in the faith with us.

*Therefore, when we talk about liberty or freedom, we are referencing those things that are permissible, not those things that are prohibited or prescribed in God's Word.

II. The bottom line

A. The hot issue at the time: food offered to idols

1. Background
 - a. Make up of Corinthian church was a group of former pagans.
 - b. Their practice was to offer meat to their gods because the meat was inhabited by demons and their gods would cleanse and replace those demons.
 - c. So, by offering meat to gods as an act of idol worship—some meat was burned, some eaten by the pagan priests, and some re-sold at the market.
2. Corinthian Christians
 - a. 1 Corinthians 1:5 = enriched in spiritual knowledge, maybe even proud of their knowledge
 - b. A non-existent god could not inhabit or contaminate food offered on his altar.
3. The problem
 - a. Two groups

- 1) We have the freedom in Christ to buy and eat the best meat in town because Jesus is the one true God
 - 2) We participate in or at least encourage idol worship when we buy and eat the best meat in town therefore, we should not eat it at all.
- b. Not all problems are solved with logic.
- 1) Child afraid of the dark
 - 2) Adult afraid of heights

*We will see how Paul addresses this specific issue and how we handle like issues but first, Paul gives us the bottom line on how we approach the permissible freedoms we have in Christ.

B. Right facts, wrong hearts

1. The problem with many believers and churches is that they have the right facts about life but their hearts are not surrendered and they become arrogant and hurtful to others.

*Are you biblically intelligent but unloving? Do you possess godly information but apply it uncaringly?

2. What is my motivation in expressing my freedom in Christ?
 - a. Am I motivated by love or by getting my way, my rights, and what I deserve?
 - b. You and I may have the right theology but can still be in the wrong because of our lack of love

*Don't use take my word for it, look at what Paul says here.

C. 1 Corinthians 8:1-3

1. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up
 - a. Knowledge
 - 1) Knowledge is essential but not sufficient.
 - 2) Knowledge tends to puff people up when not tempered by love because it focuses on what "I know" and easily makes much of me.

*Knowledge without love and intentionality leads to pride, arrogance, and damage.

- b. Love
- 1) Love by its very nature is others-focused.
 - 2) Love tempers knowledge in the same way that knowledge guides love.

*When love is the engine in exercising my freedom then the result of my knowledge is of great benefit to everyone I encounter.

2. True knowledge humbles us because it helps us realize how little we know.
 - a. A person genuinely acquainted with truth is only too conscious of what he does not know—actually knowing truth leads to humility, not arrogance.
 - b. I can know doctrine but fail to know God. I can grow in biblical information yet fail to grow in grace.

*Love is the test that approves my knowledge!

3. Christian love is constructive

- a. The aim of love is to ultimately encourage others in faith.
- b. God takes notice of love in the lives of His children.

1) If you can't love your neighbor, then you don't really love God.

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20)

2) He is known by God - God recognizes Himself in you and me.

III. Conclusion

A. Questions to begin with

- 1. Am I motivated by what God thinks or what people think?
- 2. Do I genuinely love these people?
- 3. Will this draw attention to me or to God?
- 4. Do I really need to exercise this freedom?

B. Pray