

The Royal Route to Heaven

1 Corinthians Chapter 8

As we move on to Chapter 8 it seems that Paul is continuing to answer questions from the letter mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:1, a letter sent previously to him from the Corinthians. We read of the issue of meat offered to idols which leads to a discussion of the contrast between knowledge and love.

Pray that this study will clarify the application of the law of liberty and to remind us that love is the higher calling as we walk each day on this Royal Route.

Key Word(s)

Read through the entire chapter, looking for words or themes that are repeated. You might want to underline them in your Bible.

1. One word in this chapter that is used several times is “knowledge”.

a. How many times did you find this word?

b. Write a definition below.

2. Another word found often in this passage is “idol(s)”.

a. How many times did you find this word?

b. Write a definition below.

3. Make note of any other words that are repeated or that you feel are significant here and include a definition.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-4.

1 Corinthians 8:1 begins with these words: “*Now concerning things offered to idols...*” We read on to see that their question is primarily about meat offered to idols. In order for us to understand this issue at all we must look into the culture of the day and their practice of offering meat to idols in worship. A person would bring meat to offer at a pagan altar, then it would be divided into three pieces. One part would be burned in honor of the god, but the other two parts went to the priest and the person bringing the offering. Since the priest could sell his portion, either of these last two pieces might end up being served in a home or at a restaurant.

1. Knowledge is the subject of the second part of 1 Corinthians 8:1.

a. What does the second phrase of verse 1 say that “*We know*”?

b. What does 1 Corinthians 8:4 say that “*We know*”?

2. The third and last phrase of verse 1 gives us the theme of this chapter.

a. Write that phrase below.

b. Explain what this phrase means to you.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:5-8.

1. 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 explains further the knowledge believers have about God.

a. Write what verses 5-6 say we know about God below.

b. How would this knowledge, along with the knowledge of verse 4, take away any guilt or shame in eating food offered to idols?

“*However...*” This word that begins 1 Corinthians 8:7 tells us that Paul is about to give the other side of this issue. Consider, if someone was raised in pagan worship, they would have practiced the offering of meat to an idol and eating that meat in worship to that particular pagan god. When they are saved, this practice is so ingrained in their past that their conscience may have trouble letting go of the offense in this act.

2. Considering Paul's words in verse 7 and the paragraph above, how would you explain the problem some had with eating meat offered to idols?

3. At the beginning of this chapter Paul said that "*knowledge puffs up.*" Apparently, some of the church members had let the knowledge that allowed the Christian to eat this meat to puff them up.

a. What does 1 Corinthians 8:8 say that addresses this?

b. Look back to 1 Corinthians 8:2. What does it say that applies here?

Read 1 Corinthians 8:9-13.

1. According to 1 Corinthians 8:9, what damage can be caused by a Christian walking in the liberty to eat meat offered to idols?

2. Explain from verse 10 and 11 what happens.

3. Paul stressed the seriousness of this offense in 1 Corinthians 8:12.

a. What does he say?

b. To what extent did Paul say he would go?

4. This is not the only place in scripture that talks about the consequences for causing someone to stumble. What does Mark 9:42 have to say about it?

Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

1. Paul has said that he would sacrifice the eating of meat to protect the conscience of the weaker Christian. Love often involves sacrifice that brings a great benefit for the one who receives that love. Explain how sacrificial love is involved in what Paul has taught in this chapter.

2. Who was the greatest example of sacrificial love?

a. Write out your knowledge of what He sacrificed for you.

b. Why did He make this sacrifice?

3. Can you think of a time when you or someone you know has walked in sacrificial love for someone? You might write about it here and share with the group if you like.

b. Can you think of situations that may come up in the future where you might need to walk out this sacrificial love? Write some of those here.

In closing...

1. Because of the culture of idol worship in Corinth, meat offered to idols caused a problem for some in the church. Looking at the culture in which we live today, list some common practices in the world that might cause a problem for someone once they become a Christian, especially for a young believer, even if there is Christian liberty allowed.

2. We spoke of meat sacrificed to idols, and we know that there were many temples to idols in Corinth, but we tend to miss the fact that our culture has its own idols even though they might not be carved images.

a. What are some of the idols of our society?

b. We may not sacrifice meat to these idols, but what do we offer up to them?

c. How can we keep these things from being idols, even as a Christian?

3. With all we have considered in the lesson this week, write out a statement of your understanding of how love supersedes liberty.