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Father, we thank you for this day, for your mercy and your goodness and your grace and all things that you have given us. Father, we thank you for technology that we use today to bring us together to worship you and to serve you in the way that we do. Father, I pray as we go to your word today that you will hide us behind your cross and showed us from the distractions of the world. Father, I pray that your spirit will speak to us and reveal to us your truth and will conform us to your image, that you will be glorified. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. Good evening, everyone, and welcome back to Church of the Bible. It's good to be with you. By way of announcements, Wednesday, 630. I can't believe I had to think about that.

At 630, we will continue our study through the book of Luke. We are still in chapter one. This should be our final week in chapter one, and we'll get on to more of the book and then also for anyone who has not seen it yet. We have a brand new website worked on that last week. It's live, its function and everything works.

Same URL cobonline.org but the website has been updated and for those who have tried to use it on your phone or tablet before, it didn't work the best. Now it does. So just for everyone to know. With that said, we're going to continue our series today through the book of first Corinthians. And as we go through this book, just a reminder of of where we are, just so that we can keep track and remember the big picture.

Paul had several reasons for writing the book. We've already gone through his greeting, wisdom of the cross and foolishness of men and issues of impurity. We finished that up last week. Today we are going to begin talking about gospel, freedom and love. As we do that for the next three weeks, chapters eight through eleven.

We're going to talk about knowledge and love. We're going to talk about Paul's example of love in chapter nine next week. And then Paul is going to issue us some warnings two weeks from now in chapter ten. As a Christian, we have a lot of freedom and flexibility, but that freedom often is misused and abused as christians. So we're going to address those issues for the next three weeks.

We're going to begin Today in chapter eight and we're going to be talking today about, within our freedom, love being preferred over freedom. Let's begin by looking at verses one through six. And I always tell everyone one. A message might be quick and then it turns out long. Tonight really is probably going to be quick because it's a short chapter, but let's look at verses one through six.

Paul says now about food sacrifice to idols. We know that we have our knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it. But if anyone loves God, he is known by him about eating food sacrificed to idols, then we know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is no God but one.

For even if there are so called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is one God, the Father. All things are from him and we exist for him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through him and we exist through him. So Paul begins his segment here talking about food sacrifice to idols.

This is going to be the main topic of the entire passage, and he begins that with verse one, but he kind of digresses a little bit. He goes away from his main point to add in a side point that he will later circle back to. So he says this about food sacrifice to idols. He says, we know that we have all knowledge now.

This knowledge that he is talking about is knowledge of God, knowledge that. And we'll see this here in a minute. Knowledge that there are no other gods, knowledge that idols are worthless, and knowledge that sets us free. But here's what he says about knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

We need to understand real quick what Paul is addressing. If you remember all the way back in chapter one, Paul began to address the foolishness of the Corinthians. They had all forms of knowledge, but they did not have wisdom. And so he is attacking them on that same front here in verse one when he says knowledge puffs up. The Corinthians have much knowledge, but that knowledge has built up in them properly.

It's built up in the conceit, and they misuse this knowledge. But kind of looking today as well, we do see in our world around us, not just looking back to history, to Corinth, but in the current day, doesn't

knowledge tend to puff people up? I'm smarter than you, I know more than you, but it puffs up. We get conceited. The more that we know, the better we think we might be over some people.

And I'm not saying that's everyone, but we do see that knowledge often corrupts people. So Paul says knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. He's given a distinction where the Corinthians seem to be so serving in their knowledge. He says love discards pride and rather builds people up. And we're going to see how this fits in in a little bit.

But we need to remember that Paul's main focus is eating food sacrificed to idols. And so everything we see here about knowledge puffing up and the building up needs to be seen in light of how it fits into eating food, which is sacrificed to idols. He says if anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it.

There tends to be an issue, right? You've heard those people who know everything. They have an answer and an explanation to literally everything, and they think they know it all. And Paul says, if you think that you know anything, you do not know it as you ought. Alright, let's look what Paul told us just about human wisdom real quick.

First, Corinthians 3:18. Just to remind you what Paul already said to us, he says, let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become a fool so that he can be wise. I just want to echo that warning of Paul we read about a month ago, five weeks ago. Human wisdom is foolishness.

To make a point I've made a dozen times since we started this series. Human wisdom is wisdom that says I can be born genetically male, but because I feel like a female, I am one. Right? That's human wisdom. Human wisdom declares that there is no God.

Human wisdom is foolishness, and God has allowed it to be that way so that he could show us his wisdom. And he says, let him become a fool, that he can be wise. The big issue here, here is that the Corinthians have knowledge and not wisdom, and they use this knowledge improperly. And Paul is bringing this distinction between knowledge and love. He says, let's look at Galatians six three real quick before I move on here.

Paul is writing this as well. Galatians six three says, for if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Put that with verse three. He says, if anyone loves God, he is known by him. What Paul is saying with verse three, right after verse two is to the Corinthians, it's about what they know, right? That's what puffs them up, what gives them their pride. That's what they boast in, is in what I know.

But what Paul really says is, it's not what you know, but who you are known by. Right? Have you ever heard the saying, it's not what you know, it's who you know? I. I happen to have to be in a position.

I've seen that play out a lot. A lot of things that have happened for me that have moved, have accomplished things I never thought were possible, had nothing to do with what I knew and everything to do with who I knew. I can accomplish a lot more by knowing people in certain positions than I am able to accomplish on my own with what I know.

But Paul turns that phrase around. We like to say, it's not what you know, but it's who you know. Paul says it differently. He says, it's not what you know, but who knows you.

He says, if anyone loves God, he is known by him. Now, as we read earlier in the book of Corinth, Paul emphasizes to boast only in the Lord. In fact, in the very first chapter, he tells us boast in nothing but in the Lord. And Paul has emphasized this idea of being known by God, that the most important thing isn't who we are, what position we're in, right? He emphasized last week, it doesn't matter if you're male or female or jew or greek, or if you are even a slave or free, right?

Who you are isn't important. What you are isn't important. What you know isn't important. What you do is not important. But being known by God is important.

And I love hearing how it says, if you love God, you are known by God. It's an interesting way of saying this, but to rephrase it, he says, because you are known by God, you love him. What Paul is doing here is he's placing God as the first actor, and he's placing us as the second. We only know God because God acted first. God acted in our direction and drew us to him.

And because we know God, we love him. But some things about loving and knowing God real quick and talking about love, love is going to be a huge focus point tonight. So look at one John four eight with me, the apostle John. John. He writes to us first, John four eight.

He says, the one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. As we work through the rest of the sermon, I want to point out that the emphasis in this chapter, Paul's emphasis, is loving God. That's the emphasis of the chapter, is loving God. But you, how can you love God if you do not love your neighbor?

God should be the direct object of our love and our attention. But if we love God as the direct object of our love, we must love our neighbor. We must love our fellow humans. Now, what we're going to see here through the rest of the night is how Paul talks about this love playing out toward humans. Remember, we're talking about christian freedom.

So in verse 40 says about eating food sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in this world. So we're jumping back to the original thought here. Eating food sacrificed to idols. Is it wrong or is it not? In today's world, the day we live in, talking about food sacrifice to idols almost seems pointless.

We don't go and sacrifice food to idols anymore and partake of it, so it almost seems pointless.

But it wasn't. In fact, what Paul talks about later on is there is nothing inherently wrong with eating food sacrificed to idols. Here's what he says. We know this, that an idol is nothing in the world. Idols are false gods.

They're incapable of speaking, incapable of seeing, incapable of lending aid. They're incapable of anything. And so it is merely food he says that we know there is no God but one. There's only one goddess, one creator of the heavens and the earth, of all that exist, one person who was before anything else. But look what he says.

He's getting to the point. Paul knows that there's one God, and we know that there's one God. But he also has to address the issue that there are other gods. And that seems. That seems contradictory.

But let's get to it for a minute. He says this for even if there are so called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, so not that there are, but even if to us there is one God. But look what he says. He says, because there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is one God, the father. What Paul is recognizing here and telling us, telling Corinth to recognize is that there are other gods and other lords.

They're not real gods and real lords. But you have to remember that the Greeks worshipped a plethora of gods. The Romans worshipped a plethora of gods. Right? You have Zeus.

You have Athena. You have. If we go back even further to the Babylonians, we've got a umbelic. Right? There's a plethora of gods that have, in the human creation, existed throughout history and do exist as a human creation and exist in the sense that many people have pledged their allegiance and lived their lives to serve such gods.

As Christians, we know that there is one God, but not everybody has this knowledge. So even if there are so called gods, he says, yet for us, there is one God, the Father. And here is the wisdom and the knowledge that christians have that all things are from him. All things, both seen and unseen, are from God, and we exist for him.

The entire purpose for which we exist is to serve our God. That's what we were created for. And he says there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, and all things are through him. Right? So the father is recognized here, here as all things coming from him in creation, but Jesus is recognized here as all things coming through him.

Jesus was the mechanism through which the heavens and the earth were created. It was Jesus, the word, who gave creation and sustains all things, including us. And we exist through Jesus in two ways. We exist through Jesus both in the physical act of creation. We are a creation of Jesus, but we exist through him in the act of salvation as well, that we have eternal life through Jesus Christ.

And this is the knowledge that we have. And this is the knowledge that gives us freedom. Where to a jew or a greek food sacrificed to idols has meaning to us. It's just food. We have the freedom to eat of it because we know that there are no other gods in which it was actually sacrificed to.

However, moving on to the last half of this chapter, does such freedom actually give us the right to partake of it?

Let's see what I mean. Let's see what I mean. Let's look at verses seven through 13 real quick. He says not everyone has this knowledge. Some have been so used to idolatry up until now that when they eat food sacrificed to an idol, their conscious being weak is defiled.

Food will not bring us close to God. We are not worse off if we don't eat it, and we are not better off if we do eat it. But be careful that this right of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, the one who has knowledge dining in an idol's temple, won't his weak conscience be encouraged to eat food offered to idols? So the weak person, the brother or sister for whom Christ died, is ruined by your knowledge.

Now, when you sin like this against brothers and sisters and wound the weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother or sister to fall, I will never again eat meat so that I won't cause my brother or sister to fall.

I think in today's world, I think this is self-explanatory enough, but I think it's easier to understand this, not in terms of food offered to idols, but in terms of alcohol.

And we'll get to that. So he says. He says not everyone has this knowledge of one God who is Lord over all creation. And there are people so used to idolatry, let's put our minds back. Then there are people so used to sacrifice them to Zeus, worshiping Athena, going to these temples, that if they see you, a Christian, someone who claims to follow God, eating food in those temples, that they would be encouraged to do it as well.

They would think that it is right.

He takes another detour and he tells us this. He says food will not bring us close to God.

He says we are not worse off and we are not better off if we partake of it. Meaning this, whether we eat food, sacrifice to an idol or not, has absolutely no bearing at all on our eternal destination. It won't bring you closer to God, and it won't put you further from God. He says we are not worse off if we don't eat it right. Not eating that food doesn't put us in a worse position, he says.

But if we do eat it, it doesn't put us in a better position. In other words, Paul says, my attitude toward eating food offered to idols is indifferent.

Well, he does say be careful that this right of yours does not become a stumbling block to the weak right. We have the right, the authority that, the privilege to eat what we want and to drink what we want. And Paul does not have an issue with that. Paul's issue, though, is when we exercise the rights that we have as Christians to the extent that it causes somebody else to stumble.

He says if someone, he goes back. Verse ten is what I said a minute ago. Someone sees you, the one with knowledge, eating out of the idol's temple. Won't his weak conscience be encouraged to eat food offered to idols? And he says, so the weak person, the brother or sister for whom Christ died, is really ruined by your knowledge.

Let me modernize this. Drinking alcohol is in no way a sin. Alcohol has been okay throughout human history. Alcohol has been fine even in the Bible. I mean, Jesus produced alcohol and drank of it, right?

So alcohol in and of itself is not a sin. However, what if I have a brother who's an alcoholic?

What if and I, in a social setting with that brother, sit down and pour myself a glass of wine in front of him? What do you think is happening in the mind of this brother? Do you think his conscious, being weak, so tempted by the presence of alcohol, to give in to that bottle, to partake of it, and to dive back into a world that for him, will shipwreck him?

What? By my knowledge, I know that alcohol is. I know that God does not condemn it if I were to partake of it. And yet in that knowledge, because of that freedom, I have, I caused my brother to falter.

What if there's a brother who sees me up? People have asked if I go to Mars, and the answer is no. And here is why. What happens when the alcoholic, or most people around me are Mormons who do not believe in alcohol? So what happens when the alcoholic or that Mormon sees me come out of the bar tonight and walk back to my home?

Will I have an effective witness to that person? Can I effectively reach the Mormon who does not believe in drinking alcohol? If they see me coming out nightly out of the local bar, I have the freedom to partake of that drink. And yet, in my knowledge and freedom, I cause another person's life to be shipwrecked.

Here's what Paul says about it. He says, when you sin like this against brothers and sisters and wound their weak conscience, you are sinning. Against Christ. It is, as Paul puts it, sinful for me to engage in my christian liberty and freedom to the extent that I cause somebody else to fall.

If I want to drink alcohol, do it in your home, right? Not. Not out. I don't do it out where people can see me so that I don't cause someone being weak to fall. If you want to eat meat, Paul doesn't say don't eat meat.

But Paul says, don't eat meat in a setting in which it will cause somebody to fall to be shipwrecked. He says, he puts it rather bluntly, and I think he says it in the way he says, to make a point, a stern point. He says, therefore, if food causes my brother or sister to fall, I will never again eat meat. That I won't cause my brother or sister to fall. Now, to be clear, I don't believe that Paul says, if you have someone who is a vegetarian, never eat meat again.

But rather, I think the point that he makes vividly clear is this. If partaking of meat will cause someone to stumble, refrain from it in their presence. If partaking of alcohol will cause someone to stumble, refrain from it in their presence. If that person is local to you, maybe refrain from it where they might happen upon you for their sake. Look what Paul says in romans 15 one, three.

Paul gives us some instruction further on this. He says, now, we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weakness of those without strength and to not please ourselves. Each one of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself. On the contrary, as it is written, the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

Paul says this as christians, with all the liberty that we have, with all the free that comes with following Christ, we who are strong have an obligation to bear those who are weak.

It's our job to make sure through our actions, through our lives, through our freedom, that we do not cause anyone weaker than us to stumble into sin.

Paul will say later, he says, I have become all things to all people for the sake of the gospel. He says to the jew, I have become a jew. To the Greek, I have become a Greek. To the circumcised, I have become circumcised. And to the uncircumcised, I have become uncircumcised.

And he says, I have become all things to all people for the sake of the gospel. What Paul teaches us tonight is that we need to prefer love. We cannot lovingly sit down and drink a glass of wine in front of an alcoholic. It's not possible. Such an action doesn't say I love you.

And Paul says, paul doesn't condemn eating in this chapter. Meat sacrifice to Trinket's not condemned.

Other behaviors and actions are not condemned. But Paul says this. He says we need to prefer love for our brothers and sisters over our liberty.

If we prefer our liberty and our knowledge over that of our brothers and sisters, we don't really have love and knowledge. We do not have wisdom. As we end tonight, I encourage everyone here to be mindful of those of us who are weak, to be mindful of our neighbors, and be mindful of what it is that we show them. Because we are the ambassadors of Christ.

We are his representation here on earth. And what we do may have eternal consequences to others who are around us. And to those of you tonight who don't know who God is, who don't know who Jesus Christ is, I want you to be aware. Right. The scriptures told us tonight, it said that Jesus died for you.

It says he died for the weak person, and that is you as well.

Jesus did not come and die for the ultra righteous. He did not come and die for those who were already well. But he came and died for those who are sick, those who are weak, those who are in desperate need of a savior. And you can partake of that. You can have that gift, and you can have this freedom that we talk about.

If you would admit that you are a sinner, if you would believe in your heart that Jesus is God and that he was raised from the dead, and if you would confess him as your king and your lord, he says he would save you. And if you are ready to do that tonight, hearing our closing prayer, I will walk you through verbalizing that. After our closing prayer, we will partake of the Lord's communion. And I encourage everyone to partake of that with us tonight. And then after that, I will see you all on Wednesday at 630.

Let's pray. Father, I admit that I am a sinner and that I cannot say myself. And I admit, Lord, that my ways are wrong and not compatible with you. And I believe, Jesus, that you are goddesse, God in the flesh, who lived and died for me. And that you were raised again the third day by the power of God.

And I confess you as my lord and savior and remove my crown to submit to yours. Father, I pray as we depart here, as we leave here tonight, Father, that we will be mindful, that we will appreciate that liberty and freedom you have given us while being mindful of those around us. Father, I pray that you will be glorified as we live. Not to please ourselves, but to please you and to serve those around us. That you will be glorified as by our actions.

People know that you are God and come to you in Jesus name we pray. Amen.