

THE CHURCH THAT CHANGED A CONTINENT AND THE MAN WHO LED IT

FIRST CORINTHIANS

STUDY NUMBER 7+
Wednesday, June 19, 2013

I Corinthians Chapter 8 and 9

“TO EAT - OR NOT TO EAT - THAT IS THE QUESTION”

1 What is alright for me to do - and what is not alright? “It all depends,” writes Paul, “on
2 who is watching you and how it will affect that person.” Chapter 8 has to do with
3 eating meat that had been sacrificed to pagan gods. It doesn’t sound as if it’s much of a
4 problem, really - that is, if we were dealing with mature Christians. But, as we learned in
5 I Cor 3, we are NOT dealing with such people. Paul called them “babes in Christ.”
6

7 There are some things we are commanded to do and, as such, as not debatable - such as
8 abstaining from immorality, tithing, supporting missions, treating our mates and children
9 right, etc. There is no question about those things – although, there are still spiritually
10 immature people who would argue those issues.
11

12 But in today’s study, Paul will deal with “shadow” issues, those things that are debatable,
13 that not just plain black and white. So - let’s take a look.
14

15 It appears that the best meat market in Corinth was down in the agora (marketplace) that
16 was run by the local temple. In other words, the meat being sold there had been offered
17 to gods. Because pagan Corinthians wanted to honor their ‘gods’ with their best, this
18 meat was the best in town. Apparently there were Christian believers who bought their
19 meat there simply because it was a good product. Those pagan gods meant nothing to
20 them; they understood they were man-made creatures of wood and stone that meant
21 nothing; so eating the offered meat also meant nothing to them. Hey - it was just good
22 steak!
23

24 But there were young believers - that is, new to the Christian faith - who had once served
25 those false gods. To them, eating that meat was strictly forbidden. It had become an
26 issue in the church.
27

28 1 Cor. 8:1-2 (NLT)

29 **Now let’s talk about food that has been sacrificed to idols. You think that**
30 **everyone should agree with your perfect knowledge. While knowledge may make us**

1 **feel important, it is love that really builds up the church. [2] Anyone who claims to**
2 **know all the answers doesn't really know very much.**

3
4 There are some people who have a bit of knowledge and therefore think they know just
5 about everything. Well, they are wrong. Paul was highly educated, yet his demeanor
6 was this: Philip. 3:10 [KJV] **That I may know him, and the power of his**
7 **resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his**
8 **death.**

9
10 Now Paul states clearly that our knowledge is limited and our actions must be motivated
11 by love for each other:

12
13 **1 Cor. 8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.**

14
15 In other words, we are known as Christians not by what degrees we have or what colleges
16 we attended. We are known by our love for God and Jesus said we are also known that
17 we are known by our love for each other (the uniform of a Christian).

18
19 But what about that pesky meat?

20
21 **1 Cor. 8:4-6**

22 **As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice**
23 **unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other**
24 **God but one. [5] For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in**
25 **earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) [6] But to us there is but one God,**
26 **the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by**
27 **whom are all things, and we by him.**

28
29 No, the meat was not tainted. It was not contaminated. Why? Because the gods were
30 nothing - mere creations of pagan belief.

31
32 I have often stood in the Temple of Apollo in ancient Corinth. Butchered meat was
33 brought here and sold. Meat is just meat, nothing more or less. But....Paul adds to this
34 teaching:

35
36 **1 Cor. 8:7**

37 **Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the**
38 **idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being**
39 **weak is defiled.**

1 Well, there is the “fly in the ointment” - or “in the meat, we should say.” While the
2 mature believer-follower of Jesus could eat that meat with no resulting calamity at all,
3 there were new Christians who could not handle it (eat it). It would have been a
4 spiritual set-back to them.

5
6 1 Cor. 8:8

7 **But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better;**
8 **neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.**

9
10 Pretty clear – the meat didn’t matter at all.

11
12 1 Cor. 8:9-13

13 **But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to**
14 **them that are weak. [10] For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in**
15 **the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat**
16 **those things which are offered to idols; [11] And through thy knowledge shall the**
17 **weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? [12] But when ye sin so against the**
18 **brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. [13] Wherefore, if**
19 **meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I**
20 **make my brother to offend.**

21
22 The Message makes that passage simpler: 1 Cor. 8:9-13

23 **But God does care when you use your freedom carelessly in a way that leads a**
24 **Christian still vulnerable to those old associations to be thrown off track.**

25 **[10] For instance, say you flaunt your freedom by going to a banquet thrown in**
26 **honor of idols, where the main course is meat sacrificed to idols. Isn't there great**
27 **danger if someone still struggling over this issue, someone who looks up to you as**
28 **knowledgeable and mature, sees you go into that banquet? The danger is that he will**
29 **become terribly confused—maybe even to the point of getting mixed up himself in**
30 **what his conscience tells him is wrong.**

31 **[11] Christ gave up his life for that person. Wouldn't you at least be willing to give**
32 **up going to dinner for him—because, as you say, it doesn't really make any**
33 **difference? But it does make a difference if you hurt your friend terribly, risking his**
34 **eternal ruin! [12] When you hurt your friend, you hurt Christ. A free meal here and**
35 **there isn't worth it at the cost of even one of these "weak ones." [13] So, never go to**
36 **these idol-tainted meals if there's any chance it will trip up one of your brothers or**
37 **sisters.**

38
39 See....it isn’t the meat. There are just some things we don’t do because of our concern
40 for our spiritually-younger brothers and sisters. Jesus died for them; they are precious to

1 Him. Would we deliberately - or even accidentally - cause them to stumble just because
2 we exercise spiritual liberty at their expense?

3
4 Paul wraps up this chapter by saying he would not cause offense to a brother or sister in
5 Christ.

6
7 Sometimes you find immature followers of Christ who just want to argue all the time: is
8 this activity or thing wrong or right. Our goal should be to bless those around us - not
9 hinder them. (Even though doing this might be irritating at times.)

10
11 **Chapter Nine**
12 **CHRISTIAN LIBERTY**
13

14 What do we have the right to do - or not do? Well, my friend, you have the right to
15 swing your fist as much as you want to – unless your fist stops at the end of my nose.
16 That’s where your liberty ends!

17
18 Now Paul deals with his discipleship and whether or not he had the right to be supported
19 by his ministry.

20
21 1 Cor. 9:1-6

22 **Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are**
23 **not ye my work in the Lord? [2] If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am**
24 **to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. [3] Mine answer to them**
25 **that do examine me is this, [4] Have we not power to eat and to drink? [5] Have we**
26 **not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren**
27 **of the Lord, and Cephas? [6] Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear**
28 **working?**

29
30 Paul now deals with Christian believers who feel they can do about anything they want to
31 because of their connection with Christ at the new birth. Paul answers this untruth by
32 saying if such were true for them, how much more so would it be for him? But he would
33 not claim such pretension lest he become a stumbling block to others.

34
35 Paul wrote clearly, “I am an apostle!” Now several things had to be true in order for that
36 to be a reality.

37
38 1) He had to have seen the Lord. The supreme test of an apostle is that he was a witness
39 to the resurrected Lord. Acts 2:32

40 **This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.**

1 Acts 3:15

2 **And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we**
3 **are witnesses.**

4 Acts 4:33

5 **And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord**
6 **Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.**

7
8 Paul had an intense personal relationship with Christ. That's why he wrote in 2 Tim.
9 1:12

10 **For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for**
11 **I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I**
12 **have committed unto him against that day.** Paul wrote, "I know WHOM I have
13 believed...." not "What I have believed." So his knowledge of the Lord was not second
14 hand.

15
16 2. Paul made it clear that the ministry the Lord had personally intrusted to him had borne
17 great fruit.

18
19 Paul termed his ministry the "seal" of his authority in Christ. *In ancient days the seal*
20 *was extremely important. When a cargo of grain or dates or the like was being sent*
21 *off, the last thing done was that the containers were sealed with a seal to show that the*
22 *consignment was genuinely what it claimed to be. When a will was made it was sealed*
23 *with seven seals; and it was not legally valid unless it was produced with the seven seals*
24 *intact. The very fact of the Corinthian church was the guarantee of Paul's apostleship.*
25 I CORINTHIANS / BARCLAY / WESTMINSTER PRESS / PAGES 78-79

26
27 Paul was making the case that he as an Apostle had the right to live a certain life and to
28 do certain things; but he would not because someone might be negatively influenced
29 concerning Christ.

30
31 NOW HE WRITES, HE HAS THE RIGHT TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE VERY
32 MINISTRY HE PROVIDES:

33
34 1 Cor. 9:6-9

35 **Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? [7] Who goeth a**
36 **warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the**
37 **fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? [8] Say**
38 **I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? [9] For it is written in**
39 **the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the**
40 **corn. Doth God take care for oxen?**

1 These verses sound self-serving and disconnected, but they really are not. In the
2 previous chapter we found that the Corinthians Christians felt they were “entitled” to
3 some liberties which might not be available for “lesser believers.”
4

5 Paul roundly and soundly refutes their claims by this: He is an apostle of the Lord. He
6 had seen the resurrected Lord personally and physically; His ministry had been very
7 effective. AND YET HE HIMSELF DID NOT CLAIM THOSE “RIGHTS” BEING
8 DEMANDED BY OTHERS.
9

10 He reminded the Corinthians that while had every right to expect financial remuneration
11 for his ministry he did not ask it nor seek it. In order to provide ministry, he had worked
12 at secular employment to make such ministry happen.
13

14 So his thesis is simple: why are you Corinthians demanding such privileges when even I
15 do not demand them?
16

17 1 Cor. 9:15-23

18 **Still, I want it made clear that I've never gotten anything out of this for myself,**
19 **and that I'm not writing now to get something. I'd rather die than give anyone**
20 **ammunition to discredit me or impugn my motives. [16] If I proclaim the Message,**
21 **it's not to get something out of it for myself. I'm compelled to do it, and doomed if I**
22 **don't! [17] If this was my own idea of just another way to make a living, I'd expect**
23 **some pay. But since it's not my idea but something solemnly entrusted to me, why**
24 **would I expect to get paid? [18] So am I getting anything out of it? Yes, as a matter**
25 **of fact: the pleasure of proclaiming the Message at no cost to you. You don't even**
26 **have to pay my expenses!**

27 **[19] Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have**
28 **voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people:**
29 **[20] religious, nonreligious, [21] meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, [22]**
30 **the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my**
31 **bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from**
32 **their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my**
33 **attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. [23] I did all this because of the**
34 **Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!**
35

36 I love this passage for I have lived it. On several occasions, while starting churches up
37 north, in order to put bread on the table for my family I worked in secular positions -
38 radio and television news and sportscasting. Those jobs not only provided for us, but
39 gave me a platform to the entire wide community in order to start the new works. At
40 times this “tent-making ministry” can be a double blessings - providing and equipping.

1 NOTE WITH ME HOW PAUL FELT ABOUT THE MINISTRY:
2

3 **1. He considered Christ's work as a privilege - not a burden or sacrifice.**
4

5 He did not work primarily for money. Income was not his primary purpose.
6

7 When I came on board here in January of 1986, it was for less than half of the salary I had
8 been receiving in my previous work. Further, I agreed to come, pending the vote of the
9 congregation, BEFORE being told what my salary would be. I must tell you that this
10 congregation has been incredibly good to Darlene, me and our family. Further, we
11 return a very large portion of that salary to the church every pay period above and beyond
12 our tithe. As an Assemblies of God pastor in the Peninsular Florida District, 70% of my
13 tithe must be paid to our district office in Springfield. But we have maintained this
14 giving practice faithfully through the years. I do not pastor here to make money. If I
15 were in any work to make money, I would return to television where I could make a
16 whole lot of it.
17

18 No, the ministry is a privilege to me. It is an opportunity for service, an opportunity to
19 see people come to Christ and be disciplined in the faith of Christ - and even to be sent into
20 ministry around the world themselves.
21

22 **2. But Paul also considered ministry as a given responsibility to Him by the Lord**
23 **Himself and he would not betray it.**
24

25 Over nearly 55 years of ministry, I have had the privilege of speaking in hundreds of
26 churches, most of them Assemblies of God, but also Christian and Missionary Alliance,
27 Methodist and so forth. Most of the pastors I have encountered have been honest, hard-
28 working people who gave Christ the very best they had. I am delighted to be among
29 their company. But occasionally I would run across those who were lazy or just plain
30 paranoid - or both. Some of these pastors felt "entitled" to sleep in, work little, be paid a
31 lot, and have people bow and scrape to them. Their churches were small and the
32 congregations were struggling. Being called into ministry for Jesus is a tremendous duty.
33 We do not take it lightly.
34

35 **3. Paul knew, as most ministers do, that their reward is just simply fabulous.**
36

37 **In this life** we have the joy of meeting and often influencing people for Christ. We often
38 see homes put back together. Backsliders return. Churches grow and become more
39 powerful voices in the community. Marry young couples (sometimes older ones!).
40 Baptize people in water. Dedicate babies to the Lord. And the list of such joys goes on

1 endlessly. Great payment, indeed, for all of us who have the joy of following our Lord's
2 directives in His work.

3
4 **But also in the life to come** we know we are laying up there great treasures. Here is
5 how Paul phrased it from his death dungeon in Rome: 2 Tim. 4:6-8 **For I am now**
6 **ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought a**
7 **good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is**
8 **laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall**
9 **give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his**
10 **appearing.**

11
12 My friend, what are you sending on ahead to be counted for eternity?

13
14 **4. Paul knew that effective ministry was flexible.**

15
16 1 Cor. 9:21-23 [KJV]

17 **To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but**
18 **under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. [22] To the**
19 **weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men,**
20 **that I might by all means save some. [23] And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I**
21 **might be partaker thereof with you.**

22
23 From The Message: 1 Cor. 9:20-23

24 **.... religious, nonreligious, [21] meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, [22]**
25 **the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my**
26 **bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from**
27 **their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my**
28 **attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. [23] I did all this because of the**
29 **Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!**

30
31 Not much gets done for Christ located only in the confines of a monastery or convent.
32 Jesus sends us OUT INTO THE WORLD...into the highways and byways of life. Great
33 ministries are strong in doctrine and righteousness....but very flexible in outreach.

34
35 **NOW WE COME TO AN INCREDIBLY STRONG STATEMENT FROM THE**
36 **GREAT APOSTLE:**

37
38 1 Cor. 9:24-27

39 **You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one**
40 **wins. Run to win. [25] All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that**

1 tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.

2 [26] I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it
3 everything I've got. No sloppy living for me! [27] I'm staying alert and in top
4 condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and
5 then missing out myself.

6
7 Great athletes give their efforts everything they have. No holding back. Paul said that
8 alertness was necessary. Staying in top condition spiritually. No sleeping through the
9 war.

10
11 And his last statement is so strong: I batter my body; I make it my slave; lest after I have
12 preached to others I myself should fail to stand the test.

13
14 Oh, my friend, I do not want to lose my crown. I will not lose my place. Until Jesus
15 comes we serve Him with all that we have:

16
17 *All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give;*
18 *I will ever love and trust Him, in His service daily live.*
19 *I surrender all; I surrender all;*
20 *All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.*

- 21
22
23 * Next week I will be attending a family reunion in California.
24 * On Wednesday night July 3, we will observe our grand patriotic rally and fireworks.
25 * We resume our study in I Corinthians Wednesday night, July 10.