SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · LIVING IN THE LIGHT



DEEP DIVE

1 Corinthians

Chapter Eight, Verses 1–13

Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Builds Up — meat offered to idols, the one God and one Lord, and the brother for whose sake Christ died

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

The Corinthians knew an idol was nothing, and they were right. Paul agrees with their theology and then turns the question around: what does your knowledge do to the brother beside you, the one for whose sake Christ died? Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 8:1–13

knowledge · one Lord · conscience · the brother

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Four movements from "we all have knowledge" to "I will never eat meat again"

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"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." — 1 Corinthians 8:6

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 8:1–13

Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Builds Up — Being right about idols is not enough — love for the weaker brother decides what I do with my freedom

† How to Read This Study

This study walks 1 Corinthians 8 in 4 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1

"Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies."

† Before the Passage

"Now concerning" (8:1) is the formula Paul uses to take up, one by one, the questions the Corinthians had put to him in their letter (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Chapter 7 answered their questions about marriage; chapters 8–10 answer the next one: what may a Christian do with meat that has been sacrificed to an idol? It is one argument in three parts — the principle of love over knowledge (ch. 8), Paul's own example of laying down his rights (ch. 9, "Am I not free?"), and the warning against idolatry with practical rules for the market and the dinner table (ch. 10).

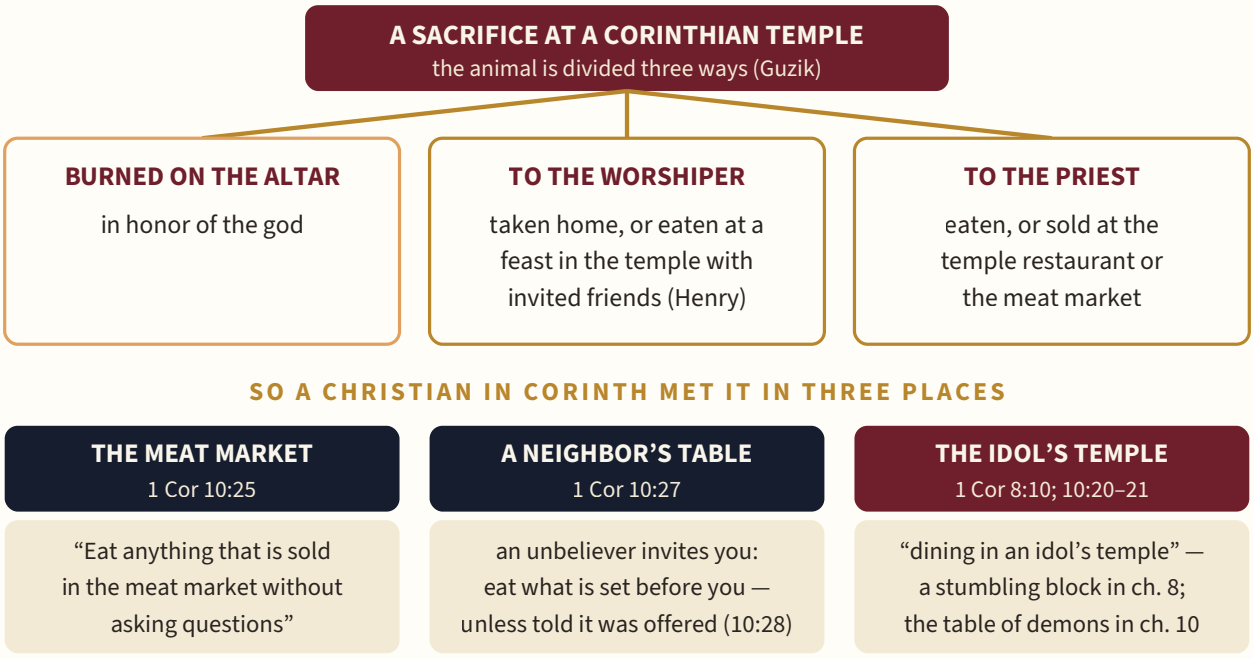
The question was not abstract. Corinth was a city of temples — Apollo's below, Aphrodite's on the Acrocorinth — and Guzik explains that a sacrificed animal "was usually divided into three portions": one burnt to the god, one given back to the worshiper, one to the priest, who might sell it "at the temple restaurant or meat market." Henry adds that the heathen held their feasts in the temple and invited their friends, and that leftovers were

carried home or sold in the markets. So the meat met a Christian at the butcher's stall, at an unbelieving neighbor's table (10:25–27) and at the temple dining hall itself (8:10), where guild dinners and family celebrations were held.

Some in the church had an answer ready, and it was good theology: an idol is nothing; there is one God. Paul seems to be quoting their slogans — "we all have knowledge," "there is no such thing as an idol in the world" — and he agrees with them. His Old Testament root is the Shema: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4), and the psalmists' scorn for idols, which "are silver and gold, The work of man's hands" (Psalm 115:4). But he refuses to let correct doctrine be the last word. Knowledge that does not love can still destroy a brother.

Read the chapter as an argument that narrows from the head to the heart. It opens with knowledge and love (vv. 1–3), confesses the one God and one Lord (vv. 4–6), notices the brother who does not yet know it (vv. 7–8), and ends with that brother's soul in the balance (vv. 9–13): he is someone "for whose sake Christ died," and to wound him is to "sin against Christ." Paul's final sentence is in the first person — "I will never eat meat again" — and it leads straight into chapter 9, where he shows the Corinthians that he lives what he asks.

FIGURE · WHERE THE SACRIFICED MEAT WENT



Chapter 8 answers with love for the weaker brother; chapter 10 finishes the case.

Follow the meat from the altar to the street: the Corinthians' question met them at the market, at a neighbor's table and in the temple itself.

I
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1–3

Knowledge and Love

"We all have knowledge" — but knowledge inflates and love builds, and being known by God matters most

> [1] *Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.* [2] *If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;* [3] *but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1–3

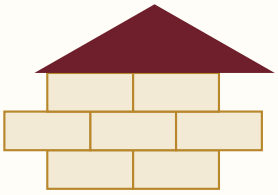
FIGURE · A BUBBLE AND A BUILDING

KNOWLEDGE PUFFS UP
physioō · G5448 · to inflate



swells the one who has it (v1)
"supposes that he knows" (v2)
grows bigger, not stronger

LOVE BUILDS UP
oikodomeō · G3618 · to build a house



a building
builds up the brother (v1)
"loves God … known by Him" (v3)
grows stronger, not just bigger

THE IRONY OF VERSE 10 — THE SAME VERB

The weak brother's conscience will be "strengthened" (KJV "emboldened") — *oikodomēthēsetai*, "built up" — to eat what ruins him.

Guzik: their misuse of liberty "was building others up towards sin."

Both knowledge and love make something grow — one inflates, one builds — and in verse 10 careless knowledge "builds" a brother straight into sin.

γνῶσις · φυσιοῖ

GNŌSIS · PHYSIOI · "KNOWLEDGE … MAKES ARROGANT" · G1108, G5448

Gnōsis (G1108) was a Corinthian favorite: Paul thanked God that they were "enriched … in all knowledge" (1:5), and the word appears five times in this chapter (vv. 1 twice, 7, 10, 11). *Physioō* (G5448) is "to puff up, inflate" — from *physa*, a pair of bellows. Of its seven New Testament uses, six are in 1 Corinthians (4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4) and the seventh in Colossians 2:18. It is the Corinthian sin: "arrogant" in 4:18 and 5:2, and the thing love never does in 13:4 ("love … is not arrogant"). Knowledge alone fills a man with air.

οἰκοδομεῖ

OIKODOMEI · "EDIFIES" · G3618

From *oikos*, house, and *demō*, to build: love "builds the house." It is the key verb of 1 Corinthians 14 ("the one who prophesies edifies the church," 14:4) and of 10:23: "All things are lawful, but not all things edify." Verse 3 then turns the whole question of knowledge upside down: "he is known by Him" — *egnōstai*, a perfect passive of *ginōskō* (G1097), "has been known and stays known." Paul says the same in Galatians 4:9: "now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God." What counts is not my grip on God but His knowledge of me — and the sign of it is love.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notices that Paul does not begin with food at all. He begins with principles, because "Christian behavior is founded on love, not knowledge; and the goal of the Christian life is not knowledge, but love." Both knowledge and love make something grow, but in opposite ways: "it is the difference between a bubble and a building. Some Christians grow, others just swell!" The man who thinks he has it all worked out has shown the opposite: "If we think we know it all, we really don't know anything." Yet Guzik does not despise knowledge; he points to the knowledge that matters most — the knowledge God has of those who love Him.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul never let "knowledge puffs up" become an excuse for not studying. In a Ligonier Q&A on whether sound theology can become an idol, he answers that a theology that puffs up is not too much theology but too little — "you need to do more work in theology," because it shows "a very superficial understanding of the things of God." "There's a vacuum somewhere in a theology that produces idolatry." Decades earlier, writing in *Christianity Today* (1982), he had asked, "How can we love what we do not understand?" and answered, "The more we know him the more we are able to love him." For Sproul, Paul's point is not less knowledge but knowledge that ends in love.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon, in a short passage on verse 3 collected under the title "God's Knowledge of Us," turns the verse into comfort for a sinner just beginning to turn to God. God watches every man, but the one who has begun to love Him is watched differently: "He sees thee with an eye of intense interest." God has looked on him through all his sin and sorrow, waiting, and "when He sees the first gleam of grace, He beholds it with joy" — like a watchman greeting the dawn, or a physician seeing the first breath return to a drowned man. His word to such a one: "God doth rejoice over thee."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry hears Paul answering the proud: "You who take such liberty are not the only knowing persons." He states the principle plainly: "Knowledge, or at least a high conceit of it, is very apt to swell the mind, to fill it with wind, and so puff it up," while true love consults the good of others. "There is no evidence of ignorance more common than a conceit of knowledge"; "He that knows most best understands his own ignorance." "It is one thing to know truth, and another to know it as we ought." And the man who loves God is known — approved — by Him: "how much better is it to be approved of God than to have a vain opinion of ourselves!"

II
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 8:4–6

One God, One Lord

The strong are right about idols — and Paul sets Jesus inside Israel's confession of the one God

> 4 *Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.* 5 *For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,* 6 *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.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 8:4–6

> *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!"*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 6:4

FIGURE · ONE GOD, ONE LORD

"MANY GODS AND MANY LORDS" (v5) — SO-CALLED

Apollo · Aphrodite · Asklepios · Poseidon · Demeter · Serapis · the emperor

THE SHEMA · DEUTERONOMY 6:4
"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!"

ONE GOD, THE FATHER	ONE LORD, JESUS CHRIST
theos — "God" of the Shema	kyrios — "the LORD" of the Shema in Greek
ALL THINGS "from whom are all things" — the Source	**ALL THINGS** "by whom are all things" — the Agent
AND WE "we exist for Him" — the Goal	**AND WE** "we exist through Him" — the Way

Paul keeps the one God of Israel's creed and sets Jesus inside it, beside the Father,
doing what only God does — creating all things (compare John 1:3).

Against the crowded heavens of Corinth, Paul confesses Israel's one God and places the Lord Jesus Christ within that confession as the One through whom all things exist.

εἴδωλον

EIDŌLON · "IDOL" · G1497

From *eidos*, a form or appearance: an image, a phantom — a shape with no reality behind it. The Septuagint uses it for the idols of the nations, "the work of man's hands." Paul's phrase in verse 4 is compressed — *ouden eidōlon en kosmō*, literally "nothing an idol in the world" — so it can be read "an idol is nothing" (KJV) or "there is no such thing as an idol" (NASB); Henry lists both and a third, "an idol can do nothing in the world." All three are true. The temple food is *eidōlothytos* (G1494), "idol-sacrificed," the word of verses 1, 4, 7 and 10; Jewish writers used it in scorn, where a pagan would say *hierothyton*, "sacred offering" (10:28).

εἷς … κύριος

HEIS … KYRIOS · "ONE … LORD" · G1520, G2962

Heis (G1520), "one," is the word of the Shema in the Greek Old Testament: *Kyrios heis estin*, "the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Paul uses it three times in verses 4–6 — "no God but one," "one God," "one Lord." *Kyrios* (G2962) could mean "sir" or "master," but in the Greek Old Testament it stands for the divine name. Verse 5 speaks of "many lords" (*kyrioi polloi*); verse 6 answers with one *Kyrios*, Jesus Christ, "by whom" (*di' hou*, through whom) all things are — the language of John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16. Note the prepositions: all things are *ex* (from) the Father and *dia* (through) the Son; we exist *eis* (for) the Father and *dia* (through) the Son.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik grants the strong their point: because there is only one true God, idols are not rival gods. "If meat is offered to Zeus, there is no real Zeus." He quotes Clarke: "these divinities are nothing, the figments of mere fancy; and these images have no corresponding realities." He handles the places where Scripture says "gods" — the judges of Psalm 82 quoted by Jesus in John 10:34, and Satan as "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4) — as titles of office or of false reputation, not deity. In verse 6 Paul is not separating Jesus from God: *kurios*, Leon Morris explains, rendered Yahweh in the Greek Old Testament, so believers "would be familiar with the term as equivalent to deity." Only God is the One "through whom are all things."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul does not treat verse 6 directly in the piece we have, but his Ligonier article "What *Kyrios* Means in the Bible" (from his book *What Is the Church?*) explains the word Paul uses. The Greek translation of the Old Testament rendered the Hebrew *Adonai* "by the word *kyrios*." In the New Testament it can be a polite "sir," but its highest use is what he calls "the imperial usage" — absolute sovereignty — and that is what is claimed when every tongue confesses "that Jesus is *kyrios*" (Philippians 2:11). A *kyrios* owned what he had bought: "We are God's possession because He has redeemed us." And so, he concludes, "We are all servants under one Lord" — which is exactly why the strong must not trample the weak.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's sermon "Laus Deo" (No. 572, 29 May 1864) is preached on Romans 11:36, the twin of our verse — "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." He takes the three prepositions as God the source, God the working agent and God the end of all things. In creation and providence God needed no counsel and no material; even "Gravitation is God's own power." In salvation the plan, the work and its application are all His: "Through God every good thing cometh to us," and "Spiritual work must be done by the Spirit." So the believer has one aim left — "To whom be glory for ever" — which is Paul's "we exist for Him" in verse 6.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry calls the heathen idols "merely imaginary gods" with "no power to pollute the creatures of God" — "Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:4). "The unity of the Godhead is a fundamental principle in Christianity, and in all right religion." The Father is named not to shut the Son and Spirit out of the Godhead — "the Son is God too, but is not another God." Against the heathen crowd of mediators Paul sets "one Lord, one Mediator between God and men, even Jesus Christ," by whom all things were created. "It is the great privilege of us Christians that we know the true God, and true Mediator between God and man."

III
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 8:7–8

Not Everyone Knows

A conscience trained by years of idol worship, and food that cannot bring anyone closer to God

> [7] *However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience 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.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 8:7–8

συνείδησις · συνήθεια

SYNEIDĒSIS · SYNĒTHEIA · "CONSCIENCE … ACCUSTOMED" · G4893, G4914

Syneidēsis (G4893) is "knowing-with" — the inner witness that knows along with me what I am doing and judges it. Paul uses the word eight times in chapters 8–10 (8:7, 10, 12; 10:25, 27, 28, 29 twice). In verse 7 the oldest manuscripts (and the SBLGNT) read *synētheia* (G4914), "custom, habit" — "being accustomed to the idol until now" (NASB) — while the later text behind the KJV reads *syneidēsei*, "with conscience of the idol." The two words differ by a few letters and say much the same: years of habit had trained these converts' consciences, and the old associations did not vanish at baptism.

ἀσθενής · μολύνεται

ASTHENĒS · MOLYNETAI · "WEAK … DEFILED" · G772, G3435

Asthenēs (G772) is "without strength" — the word for the sick (Matthew 25:43) and for "the weak things of the world" God chose (1:27). Here it describes a conscience that is uninformed and easily wounded, not a man who lacks self-control. *Molynō* (G3435) is "to stain, soil" — used of garments in Revelation 3:4 ("who have not soiled their garments") and 14:4. The weak man's conscience is stained because he does what he believes is worship of an idol. Verse 8's "commend" is *paristēmi* (G3936), "to present, bring near": food will not present us to God; we neither "fall short" (*hystereō*) by abstaining nor "abound" (*perisseuō*) by eating.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reminds the knowledgeable that not everyone knows what they know. A convert who still feels there is something to the idol eats the meat as worship, and his conscience is defiled. Why is it "weak"? "Not because their conscience doesn't work. Indeed, it does work – in fact, it overworks"; it is weak "because it is wrongly informed." He imagines the strong protesting, "but we're right!" — and answers that being right "is not more important than showing love to the family of God." On verse 8 he warns against measuring spirituality by stances on movies, drinking, music or television: "They assume that one stance or another is evidence of greater or lesser spirituality." He reads the food rule of Acts 15:29 as "a temporary arrangement" for the gospel among the Jews of that day.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

In "The Tyranny of the Weaker Brother," a lecture at Ligonier's 2010 Pastors Conference, Sproul set this chapter inside the category of *adiaphora* — things God neither commands nor forbids. Ligonier's report of the lecture puts his guardrail first: "Christian liberty never gives us the liberty to disobey God." Within those things truly indifferent, he held that conscience must be respected: "it is wrong to consciously do what we consider to be a sin," even when the act itself is not sinful. So verse 7's weak man really does sin when he eats against his conscience, and verse 8 means no one may be judged a better or worse Christian by his plate. The report notes that the Pharisees "majored in the minors."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon left no sermon on verses 7–8 that we could find, but in his expository notes on 1 Corinthians, where Paul returns to this case — "I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's" (10:29) — he states the principle of our verses in his own voice. The other man may not be able to do without harm what I can do freely; that is the weak conscience of 8:7. So, says Spurgeon, "I am to consider his want of power," and "I am not to use my liberty lest I do harm to my brother." His note on the next verses is just as short: if anything you might do would not glorify God, do not do it.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry reads "with conscience of the idol" as "some confused veneration for it": these converts "were not perfectly cured of the old leaven," and when they ate, they ate as worshipers and "contracted the guilt of idolatry." "Weak Christians may be ignorant, or have but a confused knowledge of the greatest and plainest truths." He mentions a second reading — that the weak thought the food itself unclean — but prefers the first. On verse 8: "eating and drinking are in themselves actions indifferent. It matters little what we eat," and "It is a gross mistake to think that distinction of food will make any distinction between men in God's account."

IV
MOVEMENT

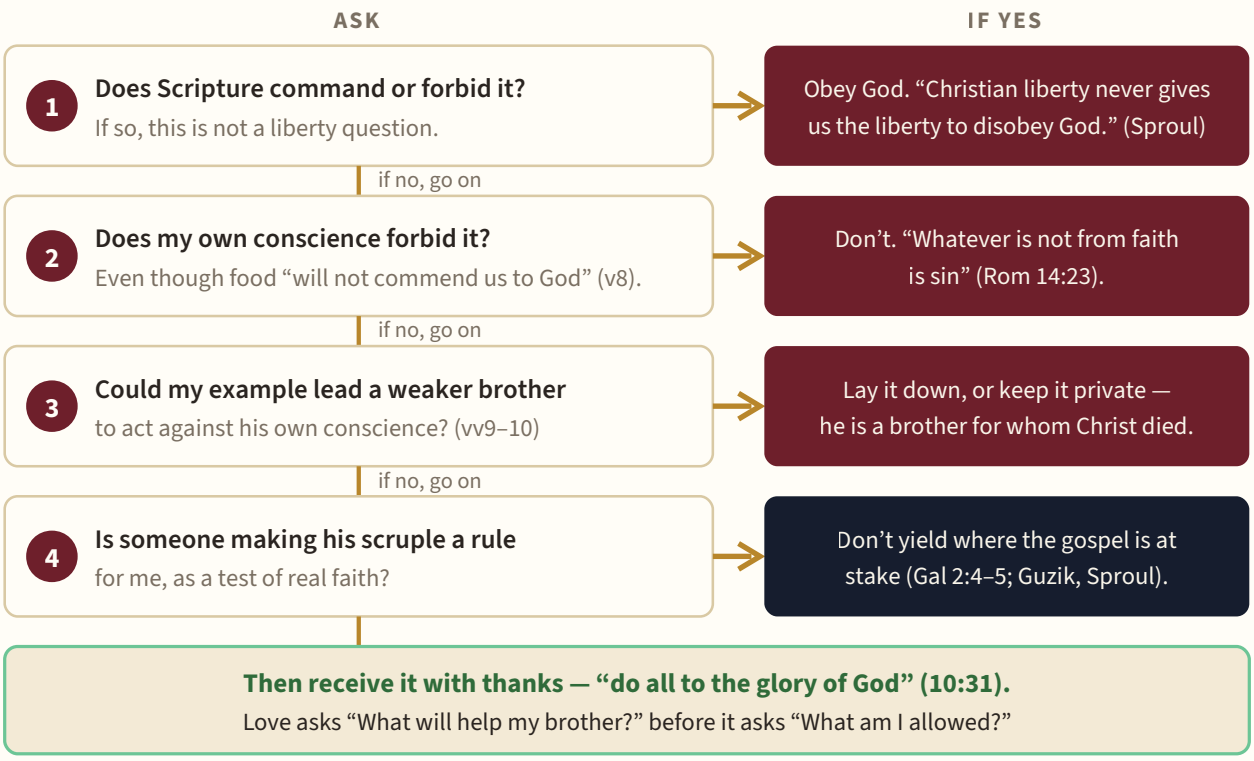
1 CORINTHIANS 8:9–13

For Whose Sake Christ Died

This liberty of yours — the brother who watches, the conscience that is wounded, and Paul's line in the sand

> 9 *But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.* 10 *For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?* 11 *For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.* 12 *And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.* 13 *Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 8:9–13

FIGURE · LIBERTY, CONSCIENCE AND LOVE



Read down the left side and stop at the first "yes": Scripture first, then my own conscience, then my brother's — and guard the gospel against anyone who turns a scruple into a law.

ἐξουσία · πρόσκομμα

EXOUSIA · PROSKOMMA · "LIBERTY … STUMBLING BLOCK" · G1849, G4348

Exousia (G1849) is a right or authority — what I am entitled to do. "This liberty of yours" (v. 9) may echo the strong man's own boast, and it is the word that drives chapter 9: "Do we not have a right to eat and drink?" (9:4), "we did not use this right" (9:12). *Proskomma* (G4348) is something struck against with the foot — an obstacle that trips. Verse 10's "dining" is *katakeimai* (G2621), "reclining" at table, the posture of a banquet; the place is the *eidōleion* (G1493), the idol's shrine with its dining rooms — used only here in the New Testament.

ἀπόλλυται · σκανδαλίζει

APOLLYTAI · SKANDALIZEI · "IS RUINED … CAUSES TO STUMBLE" · G622, G4624

Apollymi (G622) is the strong verb of John 3:16 — "shall not perish" — and here it is present tense: the weak brother "is being ruined" by your knowledge. Paul sets it beside the price paid for him: *di' hon Christos apethanen*, "on account of whom Christ died." Verse 12's "wounding" is *typtō* (G5180), to strike or beat, the word used of the soldiers beating Jesus' head (Mark 15:19). *Skandalizō* (G4624), from *skandalon*, the trigger-stick of a trap, means to entrap into sin — twice in verse 13. Paul's vow is a double negative, *ou mē … eis ton aiōna*: "never, not for the age" — KJV "while the world standeth."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik turns the strong man's rights around: "what about the rights of the weak brother?" He notes that "weak" here concerns knowledge, not self-control, and that "emboldened" comes from the words "build up": "Their misuse of liberty was building others up towards sin." To wound such a conscience is to sin against Christ. "It is true we will answer to God and God alone, but we will answer to God for how we have treated our brother or sister." Yet he guards the edge: "Paul would never allow this principle to be a way for a legalist to make demands and bind a Christian walking in liberty." Paul withstood Peter in Galatians 2; love protects the brother who could be tempted, not the man whose rules are offended. With Clarke he warns against "sour godliness."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul's 2010 lecture held both edges of this passage. Ligonier's report summarizes his duty for the strong: accommodate weaker consciences and do not flaunt your liberty — as Paul was willing to give up meat — and "I should do the act that is indifferent but offends another believer in private." But when a weaker brother tries to make his scruple binding on the church, the gospel is at stake. His example is Peter at Antioch, who became the weaker brother whose example threatened the gospel: "Paul did not have a private word with Peter, he withstood him in public." The report closes with patience for the young in faith — "for the sake of Christ and His little ones."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon, in a passage on verses 11–13 collected as "Abstaining for the Good of Others," grants that a Christian may drink wine or beer without sin. But some who copy him cannot stop at one. So he pictures a father on a cliff edge: he can stand there safely, but his boys will follow — "Though I can stand here, you cannot." Should he set them going? "If it is not good reasoning, it is safe." His rule: "Let us treat men as we would treat our sons," and "let us be weak to their weakness, and deny ourselves for their sakes." He feels free about it — "especially free when for the good of others I prefer to abstain altogether."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry warns the strong that their liberty "might occasion their falling into idolatrous actions, perhaps their falling off from Christianity." "Those whom Christ hath redeemed with his most precious blood should be very precious and dear to us"; "That man has very little of the spirit of the Redeemer who had rather his brother should perish than himself be abridged, in any respect, of his liberty." "Injuries done to Christians are injuries to Christ." Paul does not vow never to eat — "though it was necessary to eat, it was not necessary to eat flesh." "Liberty is valuable, but the weakness of a brother should induce, and sometimes bind, us to waive it."

V
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the Shema to the cross — where 1 Corinthians 8 reaches back and forward

> *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!"*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 6:4

> *"All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."*
>
> JOHN 1:3

> *"For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died."*
>
> ROMANS 14:15

> *"But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin."*
>
> ROMANS 14:23

> *"Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves."*
>
> ROMANS 15:1

> *"but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."*
>
> MATTHEW 18:6

> *"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."*
>
> GALATIANS 5:13

> *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads verse 13 beside Galatians 2, where Paul rebuked Peter for drawing back from Gentile believers under pressure from legalists: love never tempts a brother to sin, but it does not bow to a rule that would add to the gospel.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry hears verse 12 in the Shepherd's care for His flock: injuries to the weakest believers are injuries to Christ, who "has a particular care of the lambs of the flock" (compare Matthew 18:6 and Acts 9:4, "why are you persecuting Me?").

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and guards both edges — the weak brother and the legalist; Sproul presses the categories — adiaphora, conscience, the lordship of Christ; Spurgeon turns the truth toward the heart and the household; Henry gathers it into Puritan counsel. Only Guzik and Henry wrote verse-by-verse on this chapter; Sproul and Spurgeon speak here through lectures, articles and short passages on its texts.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Knowledge and love	A bubble or a building — some Christians grow, others just swell.	Puffed-up theology needs more theology, not less; we love what we understand.	God sees the first gleam of grace with joy.	A conceit of knowledge is the commonest proof of ignorance.
II · One God, one Lord	No real Zeus; kurios is the Old Testament's name for God.	Kyrios is imperial; we are all servants, bought, under one Lord.	Of Him, through Him, to Him are all things — so glory to Him.	One God, one Mediator; the Son is God, not another God.
III · The weak conscience	A weak conscience overworks; it is wrongly informed, not broken.	Within adiaphora, never act against conscience; liberty never licenses disobedience.	Consider his want of power; don't use liberty to harm him.	Not cured of the old leaven; eating is indifferent.
IV · The brother	Answer to God for how you treat His family — but don't feed legalism.	Defer in private to the weak; withstand the legislating brother in public.	Treat men as sons; be weak to their weakness.	Redeemed by blood, precious to us; wounding them wounds Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1–13 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Paul starts with love, not food.** Before he says a word about meat, he says "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." Guzik: "the goal of the Christian life is not knowledge, but love." GUZIK
- **A bubble and a building.** *Physioō* inflates; *oikodomeō* builds a house. Both make something grow. "Some Christians grow, others just swell!" THE GREEK
- **Being known beats knowing.** Verse 3 does not say the man who loves God knows Him, but that "he is known by Him" — a perfect passive: known, and staying known (Gal 4:9). THE TEXT
- **The answer to puffed-up theology is better theology.** Sproul: if your theology puffs you up, "you need to do more work in theology" — the problem is a superficial grasp of God, not too much study. SPROUL
- **Jesus is placed inside the Shema.** "One God, the Father … and one Lord, Jesus Christ" — the *theos* and *kyrios* of Deuteronomy 6:4 — and the Son is the one "by whom are all things." THE TEXT
- **A weak conscience overworks.** Guzik: it is not a conscience that doesn't work but one that is "wrongly informed." Still, overriding it is sin (Rom 14:23). GUZIK
- **Your plate is not your rank.** Food "will not commend us to God." Henry: "It is a gross mistake to think that distinction of food will make any distinction between men in God's account." HENRY
- **Careless knowledge "builds" a brother into sin.** The "strengthened" of verse 10 is the same verb as "edifies" in verse 1 — a bitter irony. THE GREEK

- **The weak brother has a price tag.** He is "the brother for whose sake Christ died." Henry: those redeemed by Christ's "most precious blood should be very precious and dear to us." HENRY
- **Protect the weak; don't obey the legislator.** Guzik and Sproul both point to Galatians 2: love gives way for a brother who could fall, but it does not let a scruple become a law over the church. SPROUL

† Questions for the Table

1 **Where has what I know about the Bible made me impatient, superior or harsh with a brother who knows less?**

A bubble or a building — does my knowledge swell me or build him?

8:1–2; 13:2

2 **What would change in my week if I believed I am "known by Him" — not just that I know about Him?**

Being known by God, not my grip on Him, is the ground of my life.

8:3; Gal 4:9

3 **Which "so-called gods" still compete for the men at this table — the bottle, the screen, money, a person, a gang?**

An idol is nothing, but the pull of an old habit is real (v. 7).

8:4–7; Ps 115:4

4 **Is there a freedom I enjoy that could lead a brother in recovery to act against his conscience? What would love do?**

My right is real; his soul is worth more.

8:9–11; Rom 14:15

5 **How do I tell the difference between a weak brother I must protect and a legalist I must not obey?**

The weak can be drawn into sin; the legalist only disapproves.

8:13; Gal 2:4–5

6 **What is one specific thing I could lay down this month "so that I will not cause my brother to stumble"?**

Paul made it personal: "I will never eat meat again."

8:13; 9:12

The Corinthians were right about idols and wrong about love. Paul agreed with their theology and then asked what it was doing to the brother beside them — a brother Christ died for. Knowledge says "I may"; love asks "Will it help him?" and, when it must, gladly says "I will never eat meat again."

Teaching the Word. Living in the Light. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; his *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians was completed after his death by Simon Browne from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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