

**TITLE: KNOWLEDGE VS LOVE**

**TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 8**

**INTRO:** James 2 teaches us about the relationship between faith and works. There are those who focus more on one than the other, even to the extreme of excluding the other (i.e., faith only). In the church, the same dilemma exists between knowledge and love. There are those who claim to be loving, yet seem to ignore the necessity to study the Scriptures to determine God's will. Then there are those whose pursuit of biblical knowledge is so important that love of the brethren & relationship building becomes secondary at best (& sometimes is even sacrificed in order to appear knowledgeable).

**I. INTRODUCTION & THESIS (v. 1-3):**

- A. (v. 1) Intro: Concerning things offered to idols ("eating things offered in sacrifice to idols" – v. 4) – question from the church. Thesis: "*Knowledge puffeth up* (inflates, makes proud), *but love edifieth*." Knowledge puffs up; love builds up! Clearly this is not speaking of **all** knowledge. **Hos 4:6**– "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*." How can we obey God's commands if we don't know them? He's speaking of the arrogance that some have when they learn something (cf. **1 Cor 4:7**).
- B. (v. 2) *If any man think (seem) to know something, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know*. Again, knowledge is important and necessary (**2 Pet 1:5, 3:18**). But the Christian with the puffed up knowledge of v. 1 (contextually, his "knowledge" allows him to do things that cause a brother to stumble), this brother does **NOT** have the knowledge he should!
- C. (v. 3) But, in contrast to the knowledge-inflated, arrogant brother, those who love God are known by God. Loving God & loving brethren go together. **1 Jn 5:3**–*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God & keep his commandments*.
- D. This teaching is extremely important for us. We put a great deal of emphasis on knowledge of the Scriptures (as we should). But many times, to some in the church, knowledge seems to be of much higher significance than brotherly love. But these two work together; you can't truly have one without the other!
  - 1. Knowledge without love isn't really knowledge, because the Bible is all about love!
  - 2. Love without knowledge isn't really love, for how can you love people (save them) without telling them the truth?

**II. KNOWLEDGE & CONSCIENCE (v. 4-7): This is addressed more to the brethren who DON'T eat this meat.**

- A. (v. 4-6) The Facts: There is only one God; there are no idols; idols are nothing!
  - 1. (v. 4) Subject reintroduced – eating things offered in sacrifice unto idols. *We know that an idol is nothing!* An idol (icon) is an image of God or a god. God had commanded no images (**Ex 20:4** –TC#2), even though an image is nothing but wood / stone. Even if the image is of God Himself, the worship would be to a "piece of brass" ("nehushtan" – **2 Kings 18:4**).
  - 2. (v. 5-6) Regardless of the fact that the world believes in many gods, **there is only one true God**.  
\*Contextually, Paul is teaching here that it's okay to eat this meat; it doesn't connect the eater with the idol.
- B. (v. 7) The Real Problem: Some Christians understand this, and some don't. The weaker Christian eats the meat with conscience (acknowledgment) of the idol. This doesn't defile his body or spirit, but his conscience! This **is** a problem. Even though Paul said that the idol is nothing, and eating the meat is fine (v. 8), this weaker brother doesn't have this knowledge yet, and does something he believes is wrong (**Rom 14:23** – "*he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith*")! This is the "when in doubt, leave it out" principle.  
\*This teaches us that **knowledge trains the conscience**. "Follow your heart" or "let your conscience be your guide" are religious suggestions heard often. But the heart/conscience must first be trained properly (by God's Word).

**III. KNOWLEDGE & LOVE: (v. 8-13): This is addressed more to the brethren who DO eat this meat.**

- A. (v. 8) Food doesn't commend (present, recommend) us to God (cf. Peter's vision – **Acts 10**). We're not judged by what we eat (**Rom 14:17**– "*the kingdom is not meat & drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*"). So, it doesn't matter whether or not we eat this meat that's been offered to an idol. We're not better or worse if we do or don't.
- B. (v. 9) But don't let this freedom become a stumblingblock to the weak brother who doesn't understand it yet. Use discretion!
- C. (v. 10) If he who doesn't understand as well as you, sees you eating this meat, his weak, untrained conscience will be emboldened (built up, edified; but in a bad way) to do something he feels deep down is still wrong. This is sin (**Rom 14:23**)!
- D. (v. 11) And your knowledge will cause this weaker brother, for whom Christ died, to be destroyed (perish).
- E. (v. 12) Failure to love and consider your brother is sin! And this sin is against Christ! All sin is against God (**1 John 3:4**).
- F. (v. 13) Loving conclusion: If meat makes my *brother* to offend (stumble, trip up, entice to sin), I'll never eat meat again! This is hyperbole. As long as he can teach this brother the truth, he's not going to do something that will cause him to sin. The idea in this passage is also to see that we need to teach the weaker brother the truth, then we can all eat meat. We are not to leave this weaker brother alone and let him continue believing that this act is sinful when it isn't. If he is not taught, he will be improperly judging his brethren (**Rom 14:3** – "*let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth*"). The weaker brother needs to learn this!

**IV. PROPER APPLICATION:**

Love seeks everyone's best interest (certainly a brother's). What if there are disagreements?

- A. On Required activities (required to do, or forbidden from doing)
  - 1. These are **not** optional for any Christian, so the stronger Christian *must not* give in & stop this activity (e.g., worship)
  - 2. We must teach and encourage the weaker brother, even exercising church discipline if necessary.
- B. On Optional matters (**1 Cor 8; Rom 14**) – Remember that *the Bible* determines what matters are optional!
  - 1. Don't be a stumbling block to the weaker brother! **Rom 14:19**– "*Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*." Remember, Christians have freedom, but not requirement, to do this activity.
  - 2. Teach and encourage the weaker brother. This is about a *weak* brother, not a *contentious, antagonistic* brother.
    - a. Help the weaker brother by studying with him until he understands that this is optional & we have the freedom to do it.
    - b. If he doesn't understand after ample study (or if he's unwilling to study), he *may* be contentious rather than just weak.

**CONCLUSION:** Congregations divide and fall apart because of failures in this area. Don't hold so tight to an **optional** matter that you hurt a weak brother! Remember that love seeks to help to make everybody a **strong** brother or sister in Christ. It does not seek itself (**1 Cor 13:4-5**)!