

July 6, 2025

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of 1 Corinthians – Part 7 Chapter 8

Use Your Liberty Wisely, Lovingly & Responsibly

Subtitle: "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"

Today we continue on our multi-year journey through the New Testament where we are seeking to understand the historical, chronological and missiological of the 1st Century Church so that we in the 21st Century Church can keep the 'CHURCH LIVE & GROWING'. As we have made our way through the Book of Acts we have stopped at various points to delve into other books of the New Testament that seem to have been written at that specific point in time. We just completed study of Acts 19 and it seems that at this point in the 30 plus year time span that the book of Acts covers, that Paul took the time to **write to the Church in Corinth.** (MAP)

In the past messages we discovered that the Church in Corinth which Paul and his DreamTeam of Silas, Timothy, Aquilla, Priscilla & Apollos had spent about a year and a half planting churches, leading to salvation, baptized and given basic discipleship to a large number of believers. After he and Aquilla & Priscilla had left and went to Ephesus it appears that the cosmopolitan atmosphere in Corinth of debauchery, hyper-sexuality, materialism, and prideful academia had caused them to become **Defiled, Divided, Disgraced, Deluded, in a State of Disrepair, a Directionless Church, Disobedient Church, and to day we see they were also Disrespectful towards one another.**

Paul, the model Evangelist, Church Planter, Pastor, Discipler, Encourager, Disciplinarian, Spiritual Physician and Building Consultant responded to those problems with some prescriptions to help with the spiritual sickness. He **REMINDS them of their HIGH CALLING TO...**

1. Be Holy
2. Develop a Fellowship of Harmony & Love
3. Glorify God.
4. Have the Mind of Christ.
5. Be God's Sanctuary & Temple

6. Honor & Respect Faithful Spiritual Leaders
7. Live as Obedient 'Beloved Children' of our Heavenly Father.
8. Live Your Life With Integrity & Godliness.
9. To Honor God in Our Relationships & Service
& today in Chapter 8 we discover
10. To Use Your Liberty In Christ in Loving Wisdom

Please take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians Chapter 8. Today's message is entitled:

Use Your Liberty Wisely & Responsibly

Subtitle: "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"

This chapter lends itself wonderfully to a 4th of July Liberty theme. Liberty is a cherished concept to us as Americans. Liberty has been Sought After and Fought Over for generations. But we must remember that Liberty isn't free, and with Liberty also comes the need for Wise and Responsible action.

Let's see what the Bible teaches us a lot about Liberty:

- **In Exodus** we read about God's majestic plan to bring Liberty to the enslaved Hebrews.
- **Isaiah 61:1...** The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

In Luke we find Jesus repeating this Isaiah passage and applying to Himself and His ministry.

- Luke 4:18...“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

Jesus laid the groundwork to show us that by believng and trusting in Him we can have Freedom from sin and its deadly effect. Salvation and Freedom go hand in hand.

2 Corinthians 3:17...Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Acts 13:38-39...³⁸ “Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.

Romans 8:1-2...There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

The following verse set the stage perfectly for today’s passage in 1 Corinthians 8...

Galatians 5:13...For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom/liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

With those verses in mind let’s hear how Paul addresses the 2nd major question dealing with Freedom that the Corinth church brings up:

1 Corinthians 8:1-13...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. 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. 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. ⁹ But take care that this LIBERTY ⁽¹⁸⁴⁹⁾ 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.

The focal verse is 9:

⁹ *But take care that this **LIBERTY**⁽¹⁸⁴⁹⁾ of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.*

LIBERTY From Verse 9 <1849> ἐξουσία *exousia*

Meaning: power to act, authority, right.

Usage: authorities(7), authority(65), charge(1), control(1), domain(2), dominion(1), jurisdiction(1), liberty(1), power(11), powers(1), right(11).

It is interesting that Biblical translators use the English word Liberty for this Greek word. It normally carries with it the idea of power, authority and rights. But if you investigate the context, it fits perfectly. As Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit and Christ in our lives we have Freedom or Power or the Right to act and live. We are no longer slaves to sin and selfishness. We are Free to act, but the underlying truth is that we are now Free to Act as Christ would have us to...in **Truth, Love and Wisdom.**

Freedom requires wisdom, love and responsibility. It is not just a carte blanche to act any way or do anything we want. As we find out today, even if it is not sinful, we are to still be wise, loving and responsible in our actions and decisions.

Let me list 4 applications given by Richard Pratt in Holman's NT Commentary. (pp. 138,139)

1. We must be aware of our weaker brothers and sisters in Christ and not exercise our liberty in ways that cause them to sin.
2. We must always seek to improve our understanding of truth so that we may experience more liberty in the Gospel.
3. We must never resent those for whom we limit our liberty but rather love them.
4. We must not condemn those whose liberties in the Gospel are greater than ours. (*of course, as long as they do not contradict Biblical teachings.*)

It appears that there was a division among the Corinth Church on the matter of Principles. They were divided over Principle, but not taking into consideration a proper understanding of **Biblical Liberty**. (verse 9)

Pratt (p. 139) tells this story.

A husband and wife sit tensely in front of their therapist's table. The husband chimes in "I'm right about this, and I think it's a matter of principle".

The wife responds "No, I'm right about this, and I think it's a matter of principle also!"

The Therapist wisely interrupts them and says, "Well, I think we have just discovered the problem. The problem here is that you both think that YOUR principle is more important than the other person. Maybe you need to expand your STRONG commitments to principles to include a commitment to include kindness and care for one another"!

Freedom and principles are great, but they need to be based on God's Word and His Love and Wisdom.

The 1st Century Church in Corinth had a problem that is not one that we in the 21st face in the same manner. Their issue was about whether to eat meat that had been sacrificed to a pagan idol. But the greater issue of Christian Liberty does apply to us. Some examples of modern day include:

- **Alcohol:** "A strong believer might feel comfortable having a beer, but a weaker believer might be tempted to drink more than they should, or might see drinking as inherently wrong, thus leading to stumbling if they see the strong believer doing so.
- **Entertainment:** Watching R-rated movies or attending secular concerts might be acceptable for some but could be a stumbling block for others who see such things as worldly or sinful. Various TV shows that deal with controversial topics. Internet usage and video game usage. Choices of music you listen to.
- **Dress and Appearance:** While there are no specific biblical rules on clothing, a believer might dress in a way that, while not inherently wrong, could cause offense or lead to temptation for a weaker brother or sister". (Google AI search)
- **Political, Governmental involvement and Philosophical views.** (*Masks, vaccinations*)
- **Proper methods of child rearing and discipline.**

These are just a few possible ideas for us to see that this 2000-year-old issue is still relevant to us today.

There is so many ways to approach this passage but I want to continue with the PRINCIPLE theme format.

Warren Wiersbe in his New Testament Commentary on 1 Corinthians gives Three (3) Key Factors to understand is we are to Be Wise, Responsible & Loving in Our Christian Liberty. (adapted from pp.594-596)

Three Key Factors for Dealing With Christian Liberty

1. Knowledge/Wisdom -

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;

Paul is not teaching here that all knowledge is bad and causes arrogance and pride. He seems to be making the point that we need to have the proper perspective on knowledge. **True knowledge** is from God...aka WISDOM...we must know God and be Known by God. That is, we need to have a faith relationship with God where we are known by Him as a faithful follower and we know Him as the one true source for knowledge and thus establish principles to live by. Knowledge is learned both by reading and learning doctrines from the Bible along with a personal relationship where we walk with God in an "on the job" training method. Where we read the manual, the Bible, and where we are shown, modeled and guided by the Holy Spirit to understand genuine truth and knowledge and then guide us to form godly, WISE principles and then in love and wisdom to put them into practice. We must be careful not to let the world, or our past exposures and attitudes form the basis of our knowledge.

Everything must be viewed through the lens of the Biblical Wisdom.

So, we see that knowledge is vital for developing Godly Wise Principles for Christian Liberty Issues.

The 2nd Key Factor needs also be integrated...

2. Love -

³ *but if anyone **LOVES** God, he is known by Him.*

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. 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.*

In this passage Paul shows us that knowledge and LOVE must go together. If you remember, Paul is now in the city of Ephesus. Later he would write them a letter as well and include these powerful verses that expand upon the teaching to the Corinthians.

Ephesus 4:14-19...¹⁴ *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, **SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE**, we WILL GROW to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. ¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.*

Paul is teaching us that we must seek Wise Truth and Knowledge from God, then to speak and live that truth out in LOVE. When we do, we will grow in our faith, and not be darkened in our understanding. We can stand firm in our faith and not be led astray by the false gods and teaching of this world. We need to link together Knowledge of God with the Love of God. **When we use Loving Wise Knowledge gained through a right** relationship with God we can be assured that we can develop Godly Principles for Christian Liberty as well as for any other area we face.

We Need Right Knowledge – Truth/Wisdom

We Need Right Attitude – Love

Last key factor...

3. Conscience/Responsibility

*⁹ But take care that this **LIBERTY** ⁽¹⁸⁴⁹⁾ 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.*

This last factor rounds out the necessary ingredients for wise godly principled living. We must let the knowledge we have learned from God developed in a loving, dynamic relationship with Him, inform and conform our conscience to think, speak and act in a responsible manner. We may have the RIGHT, AUTHORITY & LIBERTY do whatever we may think (within the Biblical sense of freedom), but we must have a genuine care and love for the faith and beliefs of others, especially those who are new in their faith, weaker in knowledge and experience. We need to take into loving consideration the effects that our actions and words may have on others. We don't need to 'walk on eggshells' so to speak and become neurotic and hindered by 'what others will think', but we need to live our lives and tailor our actions to not be a 'stumbling block' to other people.

Our conscience should be formed by the true knowledge of the Law & Love of God. Many new or immature Christians or maybe improperly taught Christians have a weak or underdeveloped conscience. If they see you saying, acting or being somewhere that they aren't spiritually understanding of, it could cause them to stumble and be weakened. This reminds me of Gen. 4:9 where Cain responded to God's concern about his brother Able with "*Am I my brother's keeper*"? Paul reminds us that the answer is YES! Those of us who are stronger in our faith should temper our actions so as to not trip up the weaker, but also to use it as a teaching tool to help them grow up and mature. We don't just let them stay weak, we walk with them where they are and help them to grow and mature.

Let me remind you of the opening applications:

1. We must be aware of our weaker brothers and sisters in Christ and not exercise our liberty in ways that cause them to sin.
2. We must always seek to improve our understanding of truth so that we may experience more liberty in the Gospel.
3. We must never resent those for whom we limit our liberty but rather love them.
4. We must not condemn those whose liberties in the Gospel are greater than ours. (*of course, as long as they do not contradict Biblical teachings.*)

Take-Away: Spend time in a Loving Relationship with God and read His Word and let the Holy Spirit develop within you a Knowledge and Wisdom, a Love and Care, and a Principled Conscience where we can live out the goal of LOVING GOD, LOVING ONE ANOTHER.