

## Message #31

## I Corinthians 8:1-13

There have always been arguments over gray areas and there always will be. This has been a problem since the beginning of the Church and it was certainly a problem in Corinth.

As near as I can determine, there were at least six major gray area arguments that dominated the N.T. era:

- 1) The gray area of eating meat or being a vegetarian (Rom. 14:2).
- 2) The gray area of observing special religious days or not observing them (Rom. 14:5).
- 3) The gray area of drinking wine or not drinking wine (Rom. 14:21).
- 4) The gray area of eating meat sacrificed to idols (**I Cor. 8:4**).
- 5) The gray area of eating meat sacrificed to idols in the idolatrous temple (**I Cor. 8:10**).
- 6) The gray area of eating and drinking in an unbeliever's home (I Cor. 10:27, 31).

As near as I can determine, there were three questions the Corinthians had concerning this meat issue:

(Question #1) - Does a believer have the liberty to eat meat which has been sacrificed to an idol? **8:1**

(Question #2) - Does a believer have the liberty to go to the idolatrous temple and eat meat sacrificed to idols? **8:9-10**

(Question #3) - Does a believer have the liberty to eat meat which has been sacrificed to idols or drink whatever is served in an unbeliever's home? 10:27

**BELIEVER'S DO HAVE LIBERTY TO PARTAKE WHEN IT COMES TO GRAY AREAS; HOWEVER, IF PARTAKING OFFENDS A WEAKER BROTHER, OUT OF A LOVE FOR GOD AND THE WEAKER BROTHER, THE STRONG BELIEVER SHOULD REFRAIN FROM THE GRAY AREA.**

The conclusion of the Apostle Paul was that the gray area was not so important, but the spiritual welfare of another believer was very important. In Paul's mind, hurting another brother in Christ was not only a gray area issue, but a sin issue (**8:12**).

**TOPIC #1** – What those who think they have knowledge of gray areas need to know. **8:1-3**

In the context of gray area issues, those who have knowledge need to know that gray area decisions should not be solely based upon knowledge but also on love.

Paul makes it very clear that even though “all” thought they had knowledge, not “all” truly had it (**8:7**).

Paul, in **verse one**, makes it very plain that the issue of participating in a gray area is not just an issue of knowledge, but also one of love.

Before we partake in ANY gray area issue, we must ask if this will build up or tear down the spiritual welfare of another believer. Out of love we must be willing to ask this question.

**TOPIC #2** – What those who have knowledge of gray areas do know. **8:4-6**

There are two types of believers identified in this chapter:

1) Those who are weak (**8:7, 10, 11**) and 2) Those who are strong.

The central issue that determines whether one is strong or weak is the issue of knowledge. It is knowledge of the Word of God that brings one to maturity (Heb. 5:12; 6:1; I Pet. 2:2; I Cor. 3:2).

**Fact #1** - Idols mean nothing. **8:4a**

To a believer with knowledge, an idol is nonexistent.

**Fact #2** - God means everything. **8:4b-6**

Those with knowledge realize there is only ONE true God. Even though our world talks about all kinds of “gods,” those with knowledge know there is only ONE true God and only ONE way to have a relationship with God by personally believing on Jesus Christ. **Verse 6** clearly establishes that both the Father and Jesus Christ are classified as the Lord God, who both were the source of all things, and our ONLY chance of having a relationship with God is “through Him,” through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

People with knowledge realize that a belief in something does not make it real.

**TOPIC #3** – What those who don't have knowledge of gray areas don't know. **8:7-8**

**Realization #1** - An idol is nothing. **8:7a**

Notice the words “until now” indicates that this one who is weak was a recent convert. One who has worshipped idols all of his/her life has difficulty immediately recognizing that the idol and the food sacrificed to it means nothing.

**Realization #2** - A conscience is everything. **8:7b**

A weak believer does not know how to listen to his conscience. According to Paul, in another text, not to listen to one's conscience is sin (Rom. 14:22-23). The problem for the weak believer is that if he sees someone else doing something and his conscience tells him it is wrong, for him, he won't listen to his conscience.

**Realization #3** - A gray area is nothing. **8:8**

Gray areas do not make one more or less spiritual. A person was not better off or worse off in their relationship with God if they did not eat or if they did eat.

**TOPIC #4** – What those with knowledge of gray areas need to know. **8:9-12**

**Point #1** - Realize that your liberty can cause a brother to stumble. **8:9-10**

**Point #2** - Realize that your liberty can kill a brother's spiritual life. **8:11**

Using knowledge to destroy or ruin others is not a proper use of knowledge. It is possible to murder a brother's spiritual life by using our liberty in a way which catapults the weaker believer into something that kills his growth.

**Point #3** - Realize that your liberty can be sin against a brother and God. **8:12**

It is possible to be a believer and participate in a gray area that is not sinful and actually be sinning while you are participating. If your liberty hurts another believer, it is sin. If what I choose to do stunts the spiritual life of another believer, I am sinning no matter what the gray issue.

**TOPIC #5** – What those with knowledge of gray areas need to be willing to do. **8:13**

A mature, knowledgeable believer needs to be willing to forfeit his liberty so as not to offend another brother.

Weak believers have the responsibility to grow to become strong believers.

Strong believers have the responsibility to not offend the weak believer so he can grow.

What will truly be seen in the life of a mature believer is not his love for a gray area, but his love for God.