

Exercising Your Rights as a Christian & 1 Corinthians 8 • What Does 1 Corinthians 8 Mean?

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MAIN VERSES

[1 Corinthians 1](#) • [1 Corinthians 8](#) • [1 Corinthians 9](#) • [1 Corinthians 10](#) • [Proverbs 3](#) • [Exodus 32:5](#) • [Numbers 25:1](#) • [Revelation 5](#)

A Community Searching for Something Bigger

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home. Love it. Well, Shabbat Shalom, everyone. Shabbat Shalom. Another week. This is great. We're so excited you're here for us today.

If this is your first time visiting or watching services online, we are a community of very diverse families. And we're going to talk a little bit about that today because when we explore Paul's letter to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians, there seems to be a dispute among the community. And even though it's a diverse community, they can't stay together because there continues to be divisions among them, finding ways to just cut lines in the unity of the community.

And I am just so thankful and blessed to be a part of a community that has somehow found a way to yearn to be closer together orbiting Yeshua than to push each other away because of different backgrounds and different opinions and different perspectives. And that's rare. I was talking to Angie about that earlier. The community I'm a part of and blessed to be in here is rare. I've never been a part of such a community like this. And I'm excited about the idea of raising my children among you. So, welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship.

Understanding Paul's Complicated Letter

1 Corinthians chapter 8. So we're going to talk about chapter 8 through 10 today. And man, this is a complex part of Paul's letter to Corinth. Lots of room for opinions, totally acceptable. Lots of different commentaries, lots of different ways to approach it because it's complicated. There's several different views because some, depending on how you look at it, it seems like Paul's changing his mind back and forth on different things real quick, as if he's like, yeah, do it, but don't do it, yada, yada.

Some scholars, critical textual scholars, think this is obviously two different letters or three different letters that are patched together because it just doesn't work. And then there's others that carry a view that I find to be the most compelling, which I'm going to present today. And so we're going to explore this section of Paul's letter that I would say is one of the parts of Paul's letters that we tend to get an exacto knife to, like we love to do, and just kind of cut out different verses to apply to our lives in different ways, either to bolster ourselves up with pride or so on and so forth.

And yeah, it's a hard section, a convicting section, because Paul here is dealing with people that claim to be mature, right? Like we would all claim to be mature, claim to be fully devoted to Yeshua, strong Christians, because of our knowledge about Jesus, Yeshua, because of our knowledge about God, because of our knowledge about the Bible. And these are the people that he's writing to. And his issue is that they're manipulating this knowledge that they have in such a way that they shift the grounds of what is good and what is evil, literally an echo from the garden that we all should be able to empathize with, reaching for the fruit.

Good, Bad, and In Between

And this entire section of Paul's letter really deals and orbits the concept of what is good. I mean, if we can get down to it, it's love versus knowledge, how to love as a community. But the idea is, what is good? What is bad, unacceptable, prohibition versus permission? And what is adiaphora? Which is a Greek term that means non-essential, neutral, indifferent. It's in between. It doesn't really matter one way or another. It's not evil, prohibited, but it's not good, great, everyone should do this. It's not, it's adiaphora—neutral.

Because we know what is clearly bad for a believer. Murder, probably not a good thing for a believer to do. Believers have no place in that realm anymore. Adultery. Believers have no place in that sphere. Things such as this. And we know what is good. Jesus paves the way. Yeshua shows us. This is what the kingdom of God looks like when my spirit is present on earth. And you could sum it up in good deeds, forgiveness, mercy, things that we need to find ourselves in.

And then there's the neutral, non-essential things, things that we would call opinions, things that we would call preferences, but non-essential when it comes to the idea of God's grace and mercy and salvation being hindered. It's not going to hinder God saving us, God's mercy, God's grace.

Examples of Adiaphora

You could say I've heard in the Bible, God doesn't care about certain things. He cares about the good and the bad. Can I dance? That's a good one. Is it good or bad? Is it evil or good to dance? I mean, it's not an ethical or moral thing to dance. I would suggest it's not an evil thing. You're not some type of transgressor because you kind of moved a little bit. It's good. When you're in worship, you're leaning back and forth. No, who cares? It's adiaphora. It's non-essential, just moving your body back and forth.

Can I paint pictures? Yes. Is this acceptable as a Christian according to the will of God? Which category does that fall into? Is it something that's morally and ethically required of every single believer? No, I wouldn't think so. Is it something that's morally and ethically bad, wrong? Believers have no place in this platform sphere of painting pictures. No. Adiaphora. It's the non-essential. It has nothing to do with anything. It's painting a picture, right? It's this gray area. Neutral.

Here's one: a woman wearing pants. He just jumped in, didn't he? Right? Wearing pants. And I would suggest, and I would even believe, more stricter fundamentalistic denominations, Pentecostal, which is lightly my background, would agree if we come down to it, it's adiaphora, right? God's not going to strip his salvation from a woman who wears pants, but it's a preference that we're convicted of based on some things we read in the Bible. And that's fine. Cool. Women should not dress like men. Men should not dress like women. There's an issue. So, pants. It's interesting. Do you guys know the history of pants? Let's talk about pants.

The History of Pants

So, pants, yeah, you're going to learn now. So, back in the day, people used to walk. And it was very, very healthy. But then they found that they could hop on top of these beasts. And it would be more efficient because we didn't have to walk anymore. Horses. And so pants, from my understanding, were originally developed to make horseback riding more efficient. It wasn't a gender thing at all. It was gender neutral. Because before this, both men and women wore dresses and skirts. So, I just thought that was neat, right? But adiaphora, but some people have

a conviction about this and it doesn't really fit. And that's okay. That's okay. The Bible seems to be indifferent about that specific thing. But we hold value in having conviction over it.

Drinking wine. So the Bible says that drinking wine finds itself at the work of Satan. It's the evil. Now, some people will make drinking wine synonymous with getting drunk, living a lifestyle of a drunkard. No, that's not. The Bible says no, that does not represent new creation. It does not represent the spirit of the living God within you. It doesn't represent dying to the old and being resurrected with the spirit of God. It's something that people struggle with, and we need to help people, but it's not something that should be a preference as a Christian. It definitely shouldn't be something that we're like, oh, adiaphora, it's just a non-essential preference. I will live a drunkard lifestyle. No, no. But drinking wine? No, [Proverbs 3](#), God's blessing will overflow your vats with wine. Okay, drinking wine. So is it good or evil? Well, it's adiaphora. I mean, some people have convictions over someone drinking a glass of wine at dinner. Some people don't. It's okay. And you are to respect that. You are to respect that. And they need to be mature enough to understand that that is adiaphora when we look at the Bible and respect you for choosing to maybe drink a glass of wine for dinner.

So yeah, how about there we go, clothing, people wearing clothing, dyeing your hair or getting a piercing in your nose or ears or something. Yeah, we have people in the Bible, women in the Bible that got their nose pierced, bracelets, all kinds of stuff. Is it, it's a little bit, well, yeah, it makes me uncomfortable. I have a conviction about that. Yeah, but the Bible, there's no evil in it. Still, you see, okay, hammered that thing, hitting the wood now. When we make our adiaphora into the prohibition from God, that's when it becomes a problem. We cause division. We cause bitterness. We misrepresent God. But the opposite is also true. When we make prohibitions from God into adiaphora, we sin against Yeshua, is what Paul says. And that's the context for [1 Corinthians 8-10](#).

Getting Into the Text

So, turn with me. [1 Corinthians 8](#). We are going to read a little bit of both 8 and 10. We're going to skip 9, and I'll summarize it. I was only going to go over chapter 8, but it would do a disservice to Paul's intentions there. And the reason why is because it's a letter. And that's what's so cool about the letters of Paul that we have in the New Testament. They're letters. This is someone's mail. We're not used to thinking about this this way. This is someone's mail. Paul wrote a letter, not to you. He did not write this letter to a first founded in truth. It's 1 Corinthians, first letter to the church in Corinth. But we get to read someone else's mail. It's just neat, right? And what makes it cooler is we are going to have some drama going on in this

letter, right? It's juicy. We have hacked into CorinthianChurch777 at gmail.com and are now reading their email. And so the only bad thing is, is that we don't have the whole conversation, right?

So, number one, we are reading a letter, not a book released on Amazon, not a public tweet, not a post on Facebook on Paul's profile. It's a letter. So we have to keep that in context when we're reading. And all we have is Paul's response. We do not have the whole conversation between this church community and Paul, the one who started it. All we have is this response. We're not even sure how many letters came before this. We know that at least one letter came to Paul, and he's responding. There could have been multiple responses back and forth. Why do I emphasize this? Because we are so tempted at times to read something, take our God-ordained X-Acto knife, and just start cutting.

And the danger of doing that is that with this specific chapter and the chapters after it, they're all part of the same letter. So let's dive in. We are going to see Paul get a little snarky. You could call it sarcastic. Paul's going on the defense. I'm just letting you know that. He's going on the defense because he's been accused of a bunch of stuff, but he's also addressing a bunch of stuff that's going on in the church of Corinth. But before we jump in, background. Everyone still good?

The Context of Temple Sacrifices

Okay, so we got the letter. We're about to jump into the letter. Now, before we get to the letter here, we're going to talk about the temples because he's going to talk about animals sacrificed to idols, and the meat thereof, and can we eat the meat? And what does that have to do with anything? It has to do with a lot, especially with us today concerning Adiaphora.

In the ancient world, you really did not have a wide selection of Texas Roadhouse and Outback Steakhouses, obviously. If you wanted a nice steak to enjoy with your friends, well, you didn't really have that. And of course, that's a generalization, but the temples would fill that sector of the community. They'd be a restaurant. They'd be this formal restaurant where you could eat the meat, and they'd also sell the meat. You'd have a temple of a deity and an offering that would go up on the altar before the big idol or the statue of the god there. And the idea is that as the meat is cooked, the smoke comes up, right? And you're cooking—you can imagine on your grill, smoke smells good, right? The idea is that the smoke is going to go up in front of the idol, go into his nostrils, and the deity is going to smell the good meat, the cow, and he's going to be pleased.

And it's not such a far-fetched idea because this was standard practice in the ancient world. We see God even described in this way—as the smoke that comes up from the altar into his nostrils, right? God's approval of the sacrifices in the temple described in the same way. And you would enter the temple and you would have tables set out. And you could sit down at the table and you could partake of the offerings that were sacrificed to the idol that's right over there, right inside the temple. It was a big festive environment, sacred meal, sacred space, sacred party. You communed at the table with the God that you served.

It's what Yahweh even invites Moses and the elders to do with him on the mountain. They go up to the mountain, they have dinner with God. That's actually the entire premise of drawing near to God through the sacrifices. He invites you to sit at his table, if you will, meet with God. That's the backbone of even Christian theology when we come for the bread and the cup, right? My body and blood. We are communing once again. We're having this sacred meal with Yeshua.

And so the idea is not so far-fetched, but the way it's practiced in pagan gods is different. We see this even in the Bible—the way it was done with pagans.

We have [Exodus 32.5](#), the incident with the golden calf. Remember, the people said, "Hey, Aaron, make us something." Moses had been gone for a while. When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of a calf, a golden calf, and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." So the next day, the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward, they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

We see the atmosphere of what was going on in the pagan temples right there with Israel. [Numbers 25.1](#). This one involves the daughters of Moab. If you remember, they drew Israel into immorality. While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women. We'll see these examples used in [1 Corinthians 10](#) when Paul makes a point about this.

And this was a form of worship to the idols. And even going further, this wasn't uncommon in the first century, and we see in Numbers where a form of temple prostitution was set forth, if you will. Sexual fornication was also part of the party atmosphere because it was considered good luck and tied to fertility, if you will, for your crops to grow—if they blessed you, and so on and so forth.

Two Different Scenarios

Let's go ahead and ask: Is this good for Christians to partake in? Is this evil or good? Is it neutral and non-essential? Well, that was the issue because people in Corinth were not

answering that question correctly. So there were 26 temples and shrines in Corinth, just so you know. So it wasn't something that was like way over there. It was part of the lifestyle there.

Imagine someone finding new life in Yeshua, giving their heart over to the God of Israel, laying it all down, dying to self, now walking in this new life. They used to participate in that often. Yeah, let's go to Outback Steakhouse tonight, right? It was that common. They used to see it, but they'd set themselves apart from it. So now you can kind of understand the difficulty they were facing.

Okay, so all this meat, of course, belongs to the priest in the pagan temple, but there's always a lot, right? Everyone's bringing offerings in, it's overindulgent, so on and so forth, lots of meat. So what do we do with all this meat? Well, what would you do if you had a whole bunch of meat just sitting around? Let's become a wholesaler for meat for Corinth. So there'd be a marketplace set up outside of the temples or at least near the temples. This would be the public marketplace where they would sell the extra meat along with any other meat. You'd go to Harris Teeter and there'd be all the meat in there and it would either be from Billy Bob down the road that has the butcher farm, or some of it—a lot of it—would also be from the temple. Just mixed together, right?

So this is a setting. And there are two different scenarios that Paul is going to be addressing, and I'm going to tell you up front. One is food offered, sacrificed, and eaten at the table before the idols in the temple—one scenario the church in Corinth is struggling with, and he's trying to get them to recognize it's not a good idea. The second thing he addresses later in the letter is food that may have been offered to idols or was offered to idols but has since been taken away from the temple, tossed in the deli section at Harris Teeter, and now it's there. So there are two different things going on that Paul's addressing, and it'll make it easier to navigate.

The Knowledge Problem

From what we can tell, you have a community of people from different backgrounds coming together in this church, some of them long-time believers, while others have just entered into this new life, turning away from the pagan lifestyle. And Paul received this letter where members of the community think they have the right to participate in going to these parties with their friends, just like they used to. These parties in the temple. And they've argued to Paul that because they have the knowledge—they're really good at studying the Bible.

Have you guys ever wanted to make a point? We do it a lot with politics, right? We'll search the Bible and try to link it to some political thing today, and we'll search the Bible and try to take it

up. Or if we want to do something or live a lifestyle, we'll take the Bible and we're like, "Get that exacto knife," right? And we will have a lot of knowledge about the Bible—so much that we can navigate it to justify things. Anyone else done that in their life? Yeah, for sure. We're good at it. The more you read the Bible, the more capable you are at this. Yeah. It's horrible. Don't do it, but we all do it. And sometimes we don't realize we do it.

So these people had the knowledge of the Bible. They had the knowledge of Yeshua, the knowledge of God. And they used this knowledge to create an almost spiritual vaccine that they said made them immune to worshipping the false God in the temple, even if they go. Because we know the true God exists. Therefore, we're not worshipping the God, right? It makes sense, right? I mean, I'm not worshipping. It's not real.

While they are actively participating in communing with this false God, right? That's the setup. And I feel like we should be able to relate to that more than we claim we should, right? Because of the knowledge that we enjoy, we're good at justifying these things.

Two Positions in the Church

And there were others in the community who would say, "I don't think you should be doing that. And I don't think you should be doing any of that. You should just stay away from all of it. Very strict—just step away from all of it. All of it. Don't touch any of it." And these people are basically arguing with Paul, saying those who participate are weak.

They don't have the knowledge. They don't have the experience. They're weak. But we are strong. We're good, strong, experienced, mature Christians. So we got this. And that's the argument. We do this. It's us.

Knowledge Puffs Up

So here's the thing. We do not have the letter that these people sent to Paul. So how do we know it exists? Because Paul quotes it as a part of his rebuttal, his response. If you have a CSV, CSB, Holman, NIV, ESV, or the Good News Translation, you will see if you open up to [1 Corinthians 8](#), you'll see a lot of sections where Paul's speaking and they have quotation marks between all of these different phrases. These are essentially parts of the letter that Paul received that he's quoting back to them. When you see that, understand what he's doing. If you have an ASV or KJV, you're out of luck, and that's why it's so confusing. So yeah, let's just go ahead and dive in. You guys ready to study God's Word? All right.

Knowledge vs. Love

Holy Spirit-inspired argument letter. [1 Corinthians 8](#), verse 1. Now about food sacrificed to idols. We know that—quote—"we all possess knowledge," something that they told him. But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God.

Oh man, that's a message. You could have that knowledge and you can feel good about knowing God, but unless you have love in your life, you're not known by God.

We're going to move on. Verse 4. So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, as they said to him, and that there is no God but one. But even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords—

Idols Are Nothing

So Paul just quotes the Shema, by the way. He takes the Shema, and he does something a bit audacious with it, if you noticed. He takes it, and he makes an addendum to it, and he puts Yeshua in it. Let's read it again. Which is it? Yes, that's his point. Yes, it's one. Anyway.

So you can see already he's playing them. He's trolling them a little bit. He's coming in with this assumed grace for their argument.

But not everyone possesses this knowledge, guys. The justification that you're using—some people are still accustomed to the idols. When they eat sacrificial food, they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god. Since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God. We are no worse if we do not eat, no better if we do. Adiaphora. Food's not going to get in the way of God pushing through and saving us and his grace being poured out. It doesn't matter.

Don't Cause the Weak to Stumble

But be careful, however, verse 9. The exercising of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone with a weak conscience sees you with all of your knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols?

So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed or ruined by your knowledge of God in the Bible and Yeshua. When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak

conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin and be ruined in their relationship with God, I will never eat meat again so that I will not cause them to fall.

The people who have the knowledge of the Bible are trying to justify this extremely risky behavior as well as encouraging others to accept it and participate alongside them. "It's okay. I know you're new at this, but this is how you become strong. You got to go to the gym to get strong, right? Let's go to the pagan temple. We'll get strong against idolatry." That's what he's saying. That's what he's saying.

Now, when it says "weak conscience," we don't know what that means. We're like, "Oh, that's our conscience. We're not sure." The best guess is that it's likely speaking about a lack of experience of believers. You have believers who have just stepped out of that lifestyle, coming into the church, and he's like, "Hey, don't take them back there. Why do you even think that's a good idea? You have this knowledge. You're strong. But they need to have wisdom in this."

The Scope of Idolatry

Now, there's a caveat here. Not everything that we want to call risky behavior or sin that we accuse these people of being involved in is ever addressed or identified anywhere else in the Bible. That's the thing. It's just that this is the scope of idolatry.

Now, Paul has not concluded his thought just because the chapter ended. You guys realize that? Paul didn't end right here at this verse and say, "Okay, chapter nine." His scribe kept writing. So if you're taking notes, [1 Corinthians 8](#) through 10 is addressing participation in idolatry and sinning against Yeshua in the name of exercising your rights, assumed rights.

Paul's point is this: you are justifying not living in the fullness of freedom that Yeshua offers while you're saying you have the right to do X, Y, Z. But the reality is, and this is something that Paul kind of hammers down, at the end you notice that Paul says, "Listen, I know I have the right to eat whatever I want. I'll eat this meat, right? Sacrifice. It doesn't matter. Meat's not going to separate me from God. Adiaphora, it doesn't matter. But if it's going to cause someone, a brother or sister, to be ruined in their relationship with God, I'm not going to eat it. I will forfeit my right."

Forfeiting Your Rights

Forfeit your right. And the reality is, if you cannot forfeit your rights for the sake of edifying other people and not causing other people to stumble, it's not freedom. You're a slave to it. It's not a right at all. And that's Paul's point. That's Paul's point.

If you claim to have so much freedom in your rights as a Christian regarding what is acceptable, what is adiaphora for your opinions, then show it by being able to forfeit it if it causes someone to stumble. That's tough. I don't like this, Paul.

If I do something that causes a weaker brother to stumble and be destroyed—like the word there means spiritually ruined. It's not just a trip. It's spiritually ruined, destroyed spiritually. If I do something, even if I can justify it, that's what Paul wants to hear. That's what he's looking for. Because if I'm associated with anything that is un-Christ-like, and I encourage fellow believers to hop on the bandwagon to support me, to celebrate, to feast in the name of Christ, and it causes them to fall away in the name of Christ, then I have participated in the same thing. Paul says you have sinned against Yeshua himself.

Why? Because you took Yeshua and you placed him as the mascot of your idolatry. We love to spray paint Jesus on our idols to make them more acceptable. And we do it more than you think. Holy Spirit, do your job. Convict our minds and our hearts in the very moment that we should know and realize the rights we feel entitled to, and to not justify holding on to these freedoms anymore and spray-painting you on every defiled thing in our life.

The Real Problem

A few points. Paul's issue is with believers who are using knowledge of the Bible incorrectly to make themselves feel better than everyone else. It's producing arrogance, it's producing pride, and as a way to justify risky behavior. Not only that, they see people that have just walked away from the lifestyle, and they're celebrating in the very same thing, feasting on the meat, engaging in prostitutes, and they see them as weak and are encouraging them to build up their endurance against sin by participating.

Matt, you've already said that. I want to hammer that home because that's the level of what's happening, okay? Because we sometimes tend to take these—we like to copy and paste Scripture on top of different areas in our life to try to make it applicable, and we need to make sure we carry the weight of what's happening with that.

So here's Paul's setup. He's responding, if you haven't noticed, in a very savage manner to believers wanting to justify this direct and undeniable idol worship ceremony because they have this knowledge and they're strong. "Gods don't exist, right? We don't..." And Paul's like, "Yeah,

you're right. They don't exist. You are right in your justification. You got that knowledge. You figured this logic out. You're good. Debate. It's good. Apologetics. You're doing a great job." But there are members of your community that you are encouraging to participate. And you're going to cause them to stumble in their faith in Yeshua in the name of you exercising your rights. I will forfeit my rights of eating and drinking for the same people as a way to show my love. Because if this is a right, then you have a choice to forfeit it. If you truly believe that it does not matter, if you truly believe it is adiaphora, then it doesn't matter. It's indifferent. It's non-essential. Then you should forfeit your right to partake if it's going to cause your brother or sister in Christ to fall.

Approaching with Grace

But Paul's not finished. He starts with almost condoning what they are proposing in the text, right? In the very first part of the letter. He doesn't come out and say whether they should or should not do it themselves. If you noticed, he doesn't address that. We could learn a lesson from that. He's trying to have a relationship with them. He's trying to get in before he—you see my point? You see my point? You cannot approach people holding an ax if you're actually wanting to get to them and speak into their life.

Understanding and Empathy

You have to let them know that you understand what they're saying or what they're going through. If someone's trapped in a sin, you have to at least be able to portray some type of empathy of what they're trapped in before you're ever going to be able to beat it out of them like we love to try to do. We have knowledge and we separate people from God using it every single day. And so this is how he starts his letter, even though I feel like he is being a little sarcastic.

Paul's Apostolic Defense

So chapter 9 says—I'll summarize it. Paul then addresses a slew of accusations against him and his validity as an apostle. But he then goes into everything, all of the things that he has rights to that he's forfeited for the sake of the gospel, right? Getting married. All the other apostles have wives, right? I gave that up. Why can't you give this up? Taking money. I don't take money from you guys. I work on tents. I'm a tentmaker. I make tents in the marketplace. I got a job. I don't take money from you, so don't accuse me of that. You guys pay for all the expenses of the families of the apostles to travel with them. I've given up my rights because I saw that it was edifying for you. And this is his whole chapter of his apology, his defense of that.

A Clear Distinction

And then we get to chapter 10. In chapter 10, we see a clearer picture of his intention of how he's about to go. Everybody good? We're with me? We're caught up? Okay. He's about to get to the point and he's going to make it very clear.

And in chapter 10, we see a clearer picture of his intention of writing this response letter the way he did. Paul is now going to make a distinction between eating food sacrificed to idols in the temple and dining with demons—is what he calls it—and food brought into the general marketplace that may or may not have been sacrificed to idols.

Meat Versus Worship

And the issue is not the status of the meat, because in that, he even agrees. He's like, yeah, it's meat. It's meat. Priests may have said a blessing over it, whatever. It's still a good cow to eat. It's still meat. The issue is not here. The issue is going and participating in the ceremonies in the temple, giving honor and worship to an idol.

From Grace to Conviction

And Paul makes that distinction here in chapter 10, where he goes from a very graceful approach in chapter 8, building the logic of how he's going to connect with people, and then goes straight black and white in chapter 10. Like, you don't go to the temple. It's not Christian. That's evil.

And he does this in a very creative way by retelling the stories of Israel in the Exodus—multiple references. He tells the stories of Israel, how they sacrificed to an idol and they ate before an idol and they danced and they committed sexual fornication.

Israel's Warnings

They're doing the same thing you did. And God wasn't like, oh, they didn't mean it. They knew it's not real. No, Israel went and danced before the golden calf. Israel went and ate before the idol and joined in with the daughters of Moab. They tested God with grumbling, so all the snakes killed them. They were doing the same thing that you're doing in the temples. But for some reason you think you're strong, right? I'm stronger than [1 Corinthians 10](#) verses 11.

And he had just listed all of these examples. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us on whom the culmination of this age has come.

The Warning About Falling

So if you think you're standing firm, strong. Be careful that you don't fall. No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will always provide a way so that you can endure it. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I speak to sensible people. I know you're up there. Judge for yourselves what I say. Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ?

Verse 18: Consider the people of Israel. Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? Do I mean then that the food sacrificed to an idol is anything or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God. And I do not want you to be participants with the demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too. You cannot have part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are you trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? No.

Incompatible Tables

Let me ask you this. Do you think you are stronger than Yahweh?

If you're taking the bread and the cup, sitting around as the community that represents the body and the blood of Christ, how can you sit in the temple and take the food and drink offered to the demons and that idol? How can you go to that restaurant and do the same thing? You cannot sit at the table of the Lord in church and then go sit at the table of demons in their temple. How do we justify this?

We Miss the Point

And we do the same thing we do with Israel. How did they not see all the great things God did for them? And how do they keep complaining? And how did they keep sinning in the wilderness? And we see this and we're like, how could they possibly think that this was okay? How could they have this experience, right?

Paul started their church—the Paul, Saul to Paul, right? He started their church and they've known these things and they've been enlightened and they're so close to the first generation of Yeshua followers. And how could they think it's okay to go and sit at the table of demons in these temples, right?

Living as Ambassadors

And we've experienced new life in Christ. And we've experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And his spirit now dwells in us. And we are the living ambassadors of new creation on the earth, living out as being the hands and feet of the kingdom of God right now. How could we justify? Fill in the blank where we sit at the table of demons and call it justified because we're strong and we know a lot about the Bible.

Such a common occurrence, I feel, that we miss it. That's his point. Like God loses it, but you think you can just go and be, oh yeah, it's cool. Like I'm righteous. That's not going to exist. Like I'm not tempted to sin at all here. I'm just enjoying a good steak.

Do You Think You're Stronger Than God?

Do you think you're stronger than God? Do you really think this?

Verse 23: He's quoting again something that they said. I have the right to do anything, you say, but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything, but not everything is constructive.

Arrogance Versus Love

Why chase it? No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. Again, chasing something you feel entitled to has a foundation of arrogance and selfishness, while love builds up others, edifies others, and promotes selflessness. And that's the spirit he's trying to let them know that they're missing.

Marketplace Food and Temple Food

Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience. This is what he says. Go to the meat market, Piggly Wiggly, Harris Teeter, get the T-bone steak, eat it, have at it, whatever, without any conscience, without thinking about it.

Why? Because the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. It's cool. If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, puts out that T-bone steak, eat whatever's put in front of you without raising questions of conscience. But if someone says to you, hey, that steak I'm serving you, it's been offered in sacrifice to the idol, then don't eat it for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience.

Navigate with Wisdom

Basically, he's saying, listen, it's a setup unintentionally or intentionally. Someone's testing you or just wants to let you know and they're wanting to see how you're going to react intentionally. Don't flop it. Eat whatever you want, but don't sit here. Navigate this with wisdom.

If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? Verse 31.

The Full Circle

So why is he trying to give all this wisdom to Corinth? They're in a really sticky city. There's a lot of landmines all around. How are you going to reach these people? Not by sinning and not by justifying sin, but there are some gray areas. There are some non-essential areas so that they may be saved.

So Paul comes around full circle from chapter 8 to chapter 10 to say what? Eating food is adiaphora. That's not going to stop your relationship with God because his grace pours out. He says that. It's not a thing. That's at the end of chapter 8. And here in chapter 10 as well. Who cares? Just eat it. Stop making such a big deal of that.

But if someone tells you it's sacrificed to an idol, walk away. Not for your sake, but for theirs. Adiaphora. It's indifferent. It isn't going to make a long-term difference, right?

Not Compatible

And again, yeah, eating food in the temple, however, before an idol, celebrating and dancing, the temple prostitutes walking all around. Yeah, but I don't engage with them. Why are you here? That is not adiaphora. That's what he comes down on. That is worshiping demons. That is partaking in that realm. But I don't believe in demons, gods, or lords. And Paul says, listen, listen to me. It is not compatible with the life of a Christian. It is not adiaphora. There's no way you're going to justify this.

A believer who is sold out for Yeshua, who sits at the table of Christ and dines with him through the bread and the cup, through whom Yeshua lives, it is incompatible for that person to sit and dine with demons before the altar of the idol, to partake in this grand celebration, the grand ceremony of worship and honor, making something that is not adiaphora into adiaphora, into non-essential.

When you do that with anything, it is a sin against Yeshua. Why? Because you are bringing that evil into the community where it will do its damage and harm in the relationship between everyone else and Yeshua. Man, that's a dangerous thing. And I think that's a really humble understanding.

Paul knows it's a real world out there. God's grace is big enough, right? You don't have to sit in a wine cellar for all of your life. You can go outside because there's a world that you need to reach, but there are boundaries.

What things do we take that are incompatible with the form of a believing life, living worship, and we make them adiaphora? God doesn't care either way. Worse off, when we invite and encourage other believers to partake in it. Join us, it'll make you stronger. Is it adiaphora? It could be. How do we tell? Well, that's the kicker.

Freedom and Wisdom

Because Paul ends with this. How do we navigate with all of this? Well, whatever you eat might be sacrificed for idols at some point. Whatever you drink, whatever you do, if it's adiaphora, it's not addressed or regulated—do everything in the glory of God. That's the trajectory. That's the source of wisdom.

It'd be so much easier if Paul just continued laying out a black and white list, wouldn't it? Oh, that's right, that's wrong. That's right, that's wrong. That's right, that's wrong. No, the world's a very gray place and it takes wisdom to navigate. That's what the scriptures are used for—to help us cultivate that wisdom so we can walk out this life, although imperfectly at times.

Do not throw it in the face of Jews. Do not cause offense to anybody because of your opinions. No, do everything to the glory of God. Make sure it represents a life that gives glory. Don't intentionally try to manipulate other people with your understanding of what is adiaphora.

And toward the end of chapter 10, Paul seeks a very liberal understanding. He's making room for wisdom as far as what is permissible. What is the gray area? What can we partake in? What can't we? And the point of that is this: If you feel you have freedom to partake in something and someone else doesn't, then he says you live peaceably. You live peaceably. Just as I also try to please all people in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Paul is not saying you be a people pleaser. He's saying that as a believer in the grace and mercy and power of God to save this world and those in it, you should also have the wisdom to not

shove it down someone's face if they have a conviction about eating meat sacrificed to idols from the marketplace.

The Kosher Question

And people always jump from this chapter to kosher. That's not even on the radar of what Paul's talking about here. We are dealing with a whole other scope of something right here. So much deeper.

That being said, Jews had a problem with any meat that was sacrificed to idols in the first century. That's likely where the concept of modern-day kosher came from in the diaspora, right? But modern-day kosher doesn't have to do with clean or unclean. It's not about that. It's about making sure it's slaughtered in a way that it's not offered to something common. Paul's like, yeah, that's not going to get in the way of God's mercy and grace and salvation. You can have a conviction on that. That's fine. But we're going to move forward and save this world and show them the grace and the mercy of God.

And the wisdom of when this is appropriate and when it's not is always intertwined in love as he starts out in chapter 8. Essentially, a Christian is supposed to be courteous to others. We all have different cultural backgrounds, political backgrounds, and traditions depending on where you're from and where you were raised. And we have different levels of conviction about things.

Conviction and Culture

So you go to some communities and modesty is a big deal. You go out to the Middle East, some areas cannot show your skin if you're a woman. Modesty. Come to the U.S.—it's a lot more lax, sometimes too lax, but laxer—shoulders not a big deal, arms, right, legs, sandals, kneecaps.

South America, I was in Costa Rica. I went to preach in Costa Rica, and I was warned when I got there. They're like, listen, listen, there is a cultural standard here that is a little bit more liberal than the U.S. regarding modesty. And the girls that you're going to see, everybody accepts that this is a standard of modesty. That's okay. How bad could it be? And it wasn't bad. I didn't mean for that word to come out. But it was different than what I expected here.

Modesty is important, but there are levels of adiaphora when conviction levels differ based on where you're from. And that's what Paul's getting at here. He's like, listen, if there is something that comes down to some form of an opinion, and it is not blatantly good or bad, right? Don't

be a jerk in trying to make that the hill you die on. Because if it's adiaphora, that means it's a freedom and freedoms can be forfeited for the sake of others. That's what he's talking about.

When you go to Piggly Wiggly, someone buys a hamburger or buys the steak and they serve it to you and say, Hey, by the way, this is a sacrifice to idols. Is that a conviction for you? You know what? I'm just going to refrain. I know I can. I'm going to reframe. This is one of those areas that gets us in trouble.

The Stumbling Block Principle

Do you guys hear me? Am I connecting? Okay. [1 Corinthians 8:9](#).

This is one of those verses that people call clobber verses. This is one of those verses that gets us in trouble. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block for the weak.

Now, this is what Paul calls a stumbling block, not an offense, not an offense. Paul is not concerned about offending people right here, okay? Not right here. He's concerned about making a fellow brother and sister stumble in their spiritual ruin of their faith, okay?

And I make that point because I think that we've all used what's called the stumbling block principle. I've used it many times. And we need to be careful what we do as believers and how we justify things that we do as believers because it may offend. Yes, that's a different issue altogether. But because our indulgence and encouragement for others to join in may cause them to stumble in their relationship with God, right?

In other words, if we're going to take that verse and we're going to use it for situations in our lives today, it needs to match that weight and that standard. You can't walk outside without offending somebody. That's why I phrased the last verse in chapter 10 when Paul's like, don't have an offense toward Jews or Greeks or the church of God. Like the gospel itself is offensive. He's saying you need to be courteous and you need to show how courteous you are. And you need to show that you are selfless when it comes to other people, where they're at, their convictions on things—adiaphora. And you need to be able to yield. Don't sit there and throw it in their face. This is my hill I'm going to die on. No.

Paul clarifies right after he says this. He says, just try to live peaceably with people. Don't we all do that? How many of us wake up every day and say, I'm going to live peaceably for every single person that I communicate with? Online, in person. No. Live peaceably. Be known for being peaceable. No. Can't we stop now? Man. Man.

Weaponizing the Principle

Chapter 8 is not talking about you doing something that, for whatever reason, offends somebody when you exercise your rights. No. It's speaking specifically about participating in something that you should not. Going to a temple and worshipping an idol. And that is the degree that Paul is dealing with. And encouraging others to participate in it as well. And causing them to stumble from where they were with God.

And the stumbling block principle—I've brought this up because I've used it in my past, and we do it all the time. We often weaponize this thing erroneously in a way that places limits on the behavior of some Christians whose conduct offends us when we have stricter behavioral standards than we see them having.

Adiaphora. These are standards that differ from believer to believer, family to family, culture to culture, that are not addressed in the scale or scope of moral or ethical regard in the Bible. But because we have a conviction, we make it a boundary in our life—a standard that we feel is good. And sometimes we ourselves feel threatened and offended when we see someone else not putting that standard on themselves.

And many times this verse will be used to take an entire church community hostage because that offends me. That adiaphora offends me. And they use this verse. I've used this verse. Anybody know what I'm talking about? A little bit? Yeah.

You're making me stumble by having the glass of wine for dinner. And the Bible says you can't do that now because I'm affected by it. That causes me offense. You can't do that. Christians shouldn't do that because I feel convicted by it and don't do it. All the while, again, the Bible says nothing about wine being a blessing.

Arrogance in Disguise

The logic goes, if drinking alcohol or dancing, fill in the blank, or dressing in certain ways may cause offense to a more scrupulous church member or members, we're obligated to avoid such behaviors for the sake of the weaker brother's conscience. We can choose to yield, but that verse is not speaking about that level again. The effect of such reasoning is to hold other people hostage to the standards of someone who has a narrow-minded view of what you should be acting like because they have a conviction about adiaphora. And it's arrogance in the guise of righteousness. At least it was for me. Clearly, that's not what Paul was intending to set as the standard. He's concerned in [1 Corinthians 8](#) about weaker believers being destroyed by being

drawn away from the church and back into idol worship. So we need to be careful to frame modern application of these verses only to those situations in which the boundary-defying actions of the strong might actually jeopardize the faith and salvation of others by leading the weak to emulate these high-risk behaviors.

Idolatry can actually lead to destruction. This is what was being denied by those who had knowledge at Corinth. But Paul solemnly warns of the danger of dabbling in these idolatrous practices. The seductive lure of idolatry is real. And the destructive power of the pagan world is real.

The Central Message

So what's the end point of all of this? What's the end point? I think I've exhausted it. You guys okay? A little bit longer section, I know. What's the end point? Can we sum up the entire section of Paul's rant? His defense of himself, the reevaluation of clarity about what Christians do, how they act with freedom, as well as adiaphora, determining what isn't a hill to die on even if we have a conviction of it.

The central message of this chapter is a simple one. Love is more important than knowledge. That's how it starts. Rather than asserting rights and privileges, we're to shape our actions toward edification of our brothers and sisters in the community of faith, that relationship. In so doing, we will be following the example of Christ who died for the weak, and also the example of Paul who is willing to renounce all meat in order to keep his brothers and sisters from stumbling because they might think that he's participating in idol worship. And this message Paul has here seems to be pointed at people who walk the line of compromise, according to the more fundamentalistic believers.

But the logic of Paul here inverts it just the same. We have people who are being so liberal with Jesus. I can do this, I can do that, justifying sin. But the logic can be inverted, and then we have folks—you're so concerned about someone else's music now. You're so concerned about someone else's clothing or makeup or a glass of wine or fill in the blank, because, to you, that's not adiaphora. You've determined that it's not. That's wrong for a Christian because it invites demons into the world, into your life. And all the while, while you're defending your position on aspects of other people that are not regulated by the Bible at all, you yourself make your own arrogance and your own pride and your own gossip and your own unforgiveness and your own malice and your own bitterness. The elements prohibited as evil in the life of a believer, you now turn those into your own adiaphora.

Let me rephrase. Sometimes we're so concerned about making non-essential things in other people's lives into sin. Usually it's so that we can have something that we can judge someone, try to manipulate, try to control someone, grasp for power. And we feel justified because this is, of course, the holy thing to do, to be conservative with sin as we see it in other people's lives when it's not. That we in turn make the things such as our arrogance and pride and unforgiveness and bitterness and gossip—we take those things that are sin and turn them into our adiaphora. It's not that big of a deal. It's not a sin. Because we're so busy making things in other people's lives a sin.

Knowledge and Love

For Paul, it is a question of love and freedom, knowledge and rights. Those lead to pride. They're ultimately not Christian values because the bottom line is selfishness. The right to do as I please when I please. Love and freedom, as he dictates in the passages, lead to edification. These are ultimately the Christian behavioral values that we need to wear as lenses because they benefit others. And that's what love does, so that they may be saved.

So, to wrap it up: love, concession, yielding for the sake of unity, caring about other believers—that is what we should be meditating on in this section. Freedom. We have freedom to serve selflessly, freedom to stop looking down on other people because they have convictions that are non-essential. Because we do that, someone will get there. That's the thing. We have a liberal and a conservative view on God's grace and how we manipulate it, and they're both wrong. Maybe that's what I'm trying to say. That's what Paul is trying to say. They're both wrong when we try to control other people.

Freedom is saying: I know I have the right to do what I want when I want, but I will forfeit my rights if it brings harm to others. Paul addresses knowledge, and knowledge always tends to be a fertilizer for arrogance and justification. We need to learn to recognize that as believers. Everything one does that affects relationships within the body of Christ should have care for brothers and sisters as the primary motivation. And respect.

Respect for Adiaphora

This is, I think, the application. Respect for someone else's adiaphora, someone else's convictions about things that really don't matter. If someone doesn't have a conviction about something that you do, and it is something that is nowhere regulated in the Bible, and not even in the posture of the Christian mission: respect. Respect. Do not tear these people down. Oh,

that church denomination, man. They think they shouldn't use musical instruments in their worship, so they just sing. That's dumb. No, you're arrogant and prideful. Who's the sinner?

Or flip it. They obviously are not true believers because they take their kids to see secular movies. I watched Marvel movies with my son. He likes Spider-Man. How do you afford it? How do you afford it? It's not a hill. Why are we dying on that hill? Why are we dying on that hill? Why are you judging other people for something that? Because we don't want to address the things in our life that we try to make into non-essential items, but they are not.

Now, you're exactly who Paul was speaking to at the end of chapter 10. Stop putting up dividing fences, slicing the greater body of Yeshua into small, minuscule parts where conveniently you always end up finding yourself among the only true remnant who are servants of God. That is exactly what the whole book of Galatians is about, by the way. God won't save you if you're not circumcised. Nah, man. Adiaphora. Deal with the level of God's grace. Love. Embrace people. Embrace differences in the community. Embrace the mosaic kaleidoscope of the kingdom of God that John has a vision of in [Revelation 5](#). God thought highly enough of you to make one of you because he thought you were beautiful. But he did not think highly enough of you to clone you. So stop looking for clones. Stop getting mad that you can't find your clone everywhere.

The Point

And I hope I've done a good job at least explaining some type of application. It would be easy to give a black and white list of everything that is sin and not sin, every single step you take, what decisions to make when you walk out that door, how to be a good parent and how to raise your kids the best way you can to be light bearers of the kingdom of God. And Paul simply does not, because he knows he can't—because he knows we're all different and we come from different places and he knows situations are going to change. The thing that he does know is that we're always going to be inclined to judge, and we're always going to be inclined to justify sin, and we're always going to be inclined to find sin where it isn't so that we can hide from our own.

And I think ultimately that's the point of all of this: to remind you that your knowledge is great, that's awesome, the way that you think, justify things and navigate—but if you don't have love, you're not known by God. And that love will be manifest sometimes in ways that are edifying to the community, in ways that are selfless to the community. No matter if you have ears or nose piercings, no matter if you have red hair or brown hair or pink hair or green hair—it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter—but there are things that do.

Love, Not Knowledge

Richard Hayes, a New Testament scholar, has a great quote, and I want to end with that. And it's pretty much everything we just discussed today: "Every congregation will profit from looking at themselves in a mirror of [1 Corinthians 8](#) and asking whether there are ways in which they are using knowledge as a weapon rather than as an instrument of love. Whether Bible-thumping certainty about revealed truth, serene confidence in the latest scientific findings, or passionate discernment of the right social issues, any knowledge that divides the community and causes the knowledgeable ones to despise those who are ignorant or uncertain is not being used in the service of God."

God help us as we once again leave services where we worship you and we claim to be in covenant and go out into this world and misrepresent you in every way, shape, or form. God help us to be conformed to the image of King Yeshua so that we would understand the division of right and wrong. We would understand what is adiaphora, what can we easily give up for the sake of others, what is not a hill to die on but what is—so that we won't be blinded to the things that are already in our heart that motivate us to run from him.

Please stand as we end in a time of worship, meditation, and prayer. This is a time that we have at the end of every service where the worship team comes up and they lead us in a time of exactly that. And you're free to worship. You're free to raise your hands, close your eyes. You're free to sit, meditate. You're free to pray. You're free to reflect on the questions that Paul has and the things that Paul brings up to this community in Corinth. If you need prayer today for any reason whatsoever, a situation in your life or something that you want to leave here today that you don't want to carry with you anymore, guys, we have a prayer team at either side of the stage. Take advantage of that.

Closing Prayer

Alvino Mocciano, our Father, our King Father, we graciously and humbly come before you once again today. And we thank you for allowing us to read other people's mail, that we can get an insight into the real people who had the real struggles that every single one of us may be having today, just in a different age and a different time. And we ask that you would give us the wisdom only your Holy Spirit can do to help us navigate what is non-essential, but what is absolutely essential. Where is the line of prohibition as a believer? Where is the line of living good? And help us not be distracted any longer with the middle ground. We thank you, Father,

in the name of Yeshua, our King, we praise you for your grace and your love and that you would stop at nothing, that we would have a relationship with you. In Yeshua's name, amen.

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