

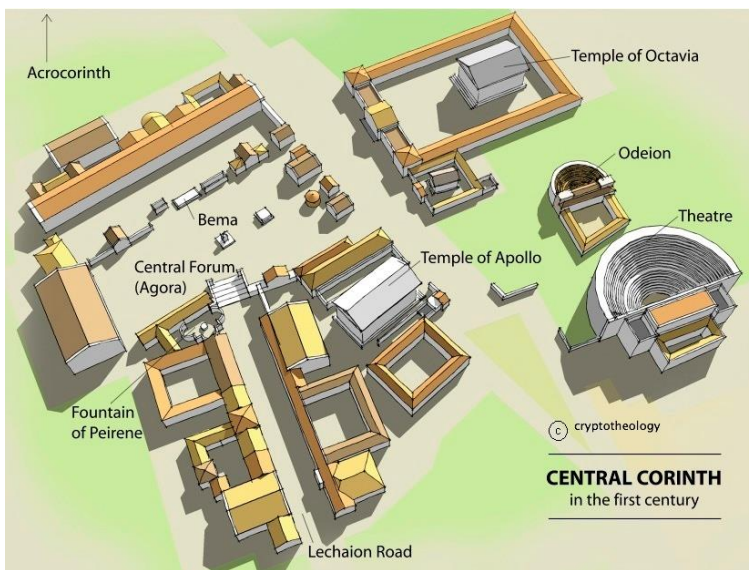
1 Corinthians 8.1-13

Shrunken Heads and Swollen Hearts

NEXT Sunday speaking in Los Angeles > Church John Svendsen pastored 27 yrs  
Church been Supporting us in Mission for 25 years!

I was Born and Raised in CA – Not been there for 3 years

Like Most people in West - CALIFORNIANS do WHATEVER they Want to Do  
Since last Time I was There Homosexual Marriage & Marijuana NOW LEGAL  
Studying 1 Corinth GOOD PREP for 3 Months of Min in Calif this SUMMER



As we Step into 1 Corinthians 8 –  
Many in Corinthian Church saying..  
“I EAT Whatever I WANT to Eat!”

I have KNOWLEDGE & Freedom

Archeologists: Corinth, Like any  
Roman City in 1<sup>st</sup> C, filled with  
PAGAN TEMPLES

v. 1 *Now concerning* food offered to idols...

Apostle PAUL answers Questions Christians in Corinth asked him 2000 yrs ago  
With those 2 Words – NOW CONCERNING – Will Address Several Key Issues  
Will take 3 Chapters > 8,9,10 – On this Apparently SIMPLE QUESTION

May NOT be FACING Most of us here in Beijing JUST NOW – Some at Home!

1<sup>st</sup> C ANSWER > VITAL and RELEVANT to us here in 21<sup>st</sup> C and beyond

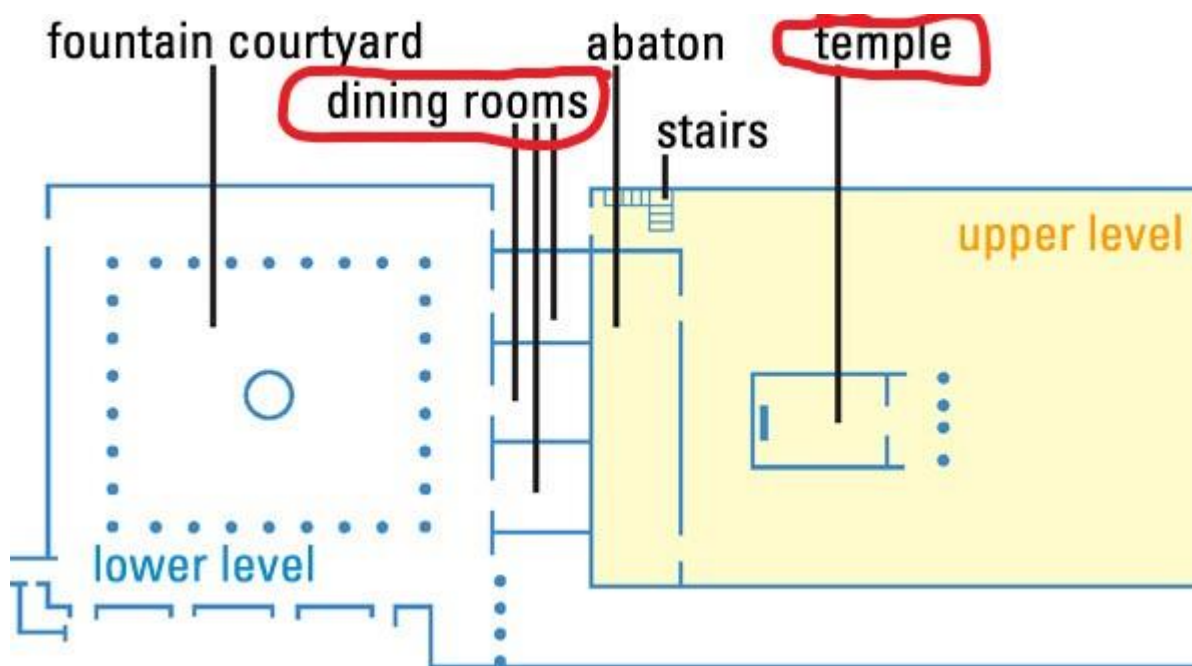
2 Main Groups in the Church in Corinth > LIBERTINES & LEGALISTS

Libertines – FREEDOM in Christ meant NO MORE RULES
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Legalists – FAITH is Kept by FOLLOWING the RULES
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Nearly Every Issue Paul Raises will be Challenged by BOTH EXTREMES

Not ONLY have Archeologist found Corinthian Temples > Also Restaurants!



McDonald's? BK? NO!! TEMPLE Restaurants... Temple Tacos on Tuesdays?  
EXCAVATED One Pagan Temple in Corinth > 40 Small DINING ROOMS  
Food COOKED other Part TEMPLE > Eat Dining Rooms w/ Statues of GODS

Archeologists FOUND this PAPYRUS from 1<sup>st</sup> C IN Corinth

*Heraias asks you to dine at the dining room of the Sarapeion at a banquet of the Lord Serapis tomorrow, namely the 11<sup>th</sup> from the 9<sup>th</sup> hour*

ENJOY some Meat in the PRESENCE of the god SERAPIS in His TEMPLE

MEAT was a DELICACY for the PRIVILEGED FEW

Most POOR Only ate Meat when GIVEN OUT during PAGAN Festivals

WEALTHY would EAT MEAT much MORE OFTEN

Meet FRIEND for Lunch? BUSINESS Associate? FRIENDS Wedding Feast?

...that age believed strongly and fearfully in demons and evils... They were always lurking to gain entry into a man's body and, if they did get in, they would injure his body and unhinge his mind... These spirits settled on the food as a man ate and so got inside him... One of the ways to avoid that was to dedicate the meat to some god...

William Barclay

GENTILES in Corinth spent Whole Life where MEAT linked to IDOLATRY  
SACRIFICED in Idol TEMPLES - SOLD in Markets – SERVED in Restaurants

## 1. Known by God

### a. Knowledge Puffs Up - 6 X's in 1<sup>st</sup> 3 vs word >> KNOWLEDGE

v. 1 Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.”

As Paul does Several Times in Letter > QUOTES Something they Said to Him  
“all of us possess knowledge” --- INDEED THEY DID!! That was PROBLEM!

Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings!... We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor 1 Corinthians 4.8.10

IF that sounds SARCASTIC, you HEARD RIGHT – Tries to SHAME Them  
WAKE UP from your BOASTING! Do you REALIZE how Crazy you Sound?

Very Confident they had ARRIVED ALREADY to FULLNESS of TRUTH  
“Don't Confuse us with the FACTS! Our Mind is Already MADE UP!”

People with Superior Knowledge >> Claimed they could FREELY EAT All

vs. 1,2 This “knowledge” puffs up...If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

The tyranny of “knowledge” as the basis of Christian ethics has a long and unfortunate history in the church...Once one's theology is properly in hand, it is especially tempting to use it as a club on others...it happens from the theological right and left...One should always beware of those teachers or systems that entice one by special “revelation” or “deeper insights.” Such appeals are invariably to one's pride, not to one's becoming a more truly loving Christian.

Gordon Fee

“Knowledge is proud that it has learnt so much. Wisdom is humble that it knows no more.”

W. Kay

Issues that are AMORAL NOT Issues that are IMMORAL > NEUTRAL Issues  
CONFLICT of Christ and Culture – BOTH the Form AND Meaning of Culture

Some Early M's to AFRICA banned Drums > Used to call SPIRITS

Some Early M's to POLYNESIA banned Dance > Seductive and Pagan

ASIAN Cultures Struggle > Ancestor Veneration, Tomb Sweeping

Yoga and Meditation

Modern Issues Internet, Media, Freemasonry or Secret Oaths, Video Gaming

BIBLE Clear Some things ALWAYS IMMORAL > Murder, Theft, Gluttony,  
Extra-Marital Sex, Homosexuality, Drunkenness, Greed, Gossip, Violence, Abuse,  
Racism, Hatred, Bribery, Oppression, Corruption, Drug Addiction IMMORAL

Areas Bible SILENT we Need WISDOM to Apply Word to each Unique Context  
Alcohol, Smoking, Music, Dancing, Art, Media, Fashion & MEAT – AMORAL  
NEUTRAL Things – Can be USED for GOOD and for EVIL > Man or GOD  
GLORIFY God – EDIFY Believers – EVANGELIZE Lost – SANCTIFY Self

The situation Paul dealt with here still challenges African believers today when,  
for example, a bridegroom is expected to provide wine for the wedding or to give  
an animal that will be offered to the spirits...Believers should not provide stimuli  
to evil but should rather spread the light of the gospel. Dachollom Datiri

NIGERIA

b. Love Builds Up > Not every Problem can be Solved REASON & LOGIC

v. 2 but love builds up. v. 3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

Paul FIRST Speaks to their HEARTS – their BELIEFS not their BEHAVIOR

Ground of Christian BEHAVIOR is NOT Knowledge >> But LOVE

You cannot FORCE-FEED Immature Believers to Quickly make them GIANTS

“Some Christians grow, others just swell”

“While knowledge may make a man look big; it is only love that can make him grow to his full stature.” J.B. Phillips

People GROW Faster in BIBLE Knowledge THAN they GROW in GRACE  
 Healthy Way to PREPARE for Ministry > GIVE Out while it is GOING IN  
 DEAD SEA died because it has NO OUTLETS > If Get Word, GIVE WORD

v. 3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

Things should NOT be Judged PURELY by Knowledge but also by LOVE

Good to KNOW God – Even BETTER to BE KNOWN by GOD

It is ONE Thing to KNOW DOCTRINE it is Another to KNOW God

Person who TRULY Knows is Very Aware of HOW Much they DON'T Know

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his”  
 2 Timothy 2.19

MEAT is INSIGNIFICANT but the SOULS of BELIEVERS Eternally Important

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? Galatians 4.9

WHY am I Preaching THIS Sermon -- Right Here Right Now?

It should be because I LOVE GOD and I LOVE YOU.

TOO Often I think I PREACH because I LOVE ME – Want ME to be LOVED

Knowledge is hollow; love is solid.

Dachollom Datiri NIGERIA

speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ  
 Ephesians 4.15

Last Sunday friends from COVENANT College here with US

We Small College 500 STUDENTS > Meet Others in the LOCAL CHURCH

John Svendsen & I driving Chattanooga hot Sunday Morning August 1976  
 Heard MUSIC from Alton Park Bible Church – Went Inside – Only White Guys  
 @ Door Pastor J.C. Upton invited us LEAD Youth Group & Teach Sun. School  
 Every Sunday 2 yrs, Last Day John/Mark, PROVES All White Guys Look Alike!

Don't Remember Pastor J.C.'s Sermons: Biblical, Powerful > Remember Prayers

Nearly Every Sunday > Pastor J.C. "I LOVE you Lord" "We LOVE You"

PROUD Bible Student, Cold-hearted – Ashamed to Declare my Love for God

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1.9-11

## 2. Created by God

### a. Only God

v. 4 Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one."

Knowledgeable Corinthians were RIGHT about this TOO > IDOLS are Nothing!

Israel had been DECLARING this for MILLENIA

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Deuteronomy 6.4

God is ONE is Not MATHEMATICAL Statement > UNIQUE, the ONLY One!

Father source of CREATION, PROVIDENCE, REDEMPTION, REVELATION

With NO CONFUSION or COLLISION – Jesus SEAMLESSLY fits in Oneness

v. 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

Paul the Pharisee NOW Understands ONE God fully Revealed in Triune Glory

FATHER is AUTHOR of Creation and SON is the AGENT of CREATION

All things MADE BY the Father / THROUGH the SON

For MANY of Us seems like OBVIOUS Statement of TRUTH – ALL KNOW  
How about MILLIONS grown Up in Communist/Atheistic Regimes? > No God!

All the ENERGY they Waste harassing CHURCH PROVES He is REAL!

PAGANS divide Up their World – Different gods rule Different Spheres

TRUE God is MAKER, SUSTAINER, RULER, and JUDGE over ALL Earth

I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God...that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other.                      Isaiah 45.5-6

b. Other gods Paul separates TRUE GOD from the Idols of CORINTH

v. 5 For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—

Many Mythological Deities & Lords of MYSTERY Cults Worshipped in Corinth

They do NOT OBJECTIVELY Exist – FALSE gods

ASIA Buddha Everywhere – Shrines, Mountaintops, Taxi Dash, Screensavers

B > Sitting, Standing, Stetched Out Laying Down, Smiling, Stern, Scouling

Thousands of People praying FERVENTLY for Blessing of Buddha

Testimonies of Healings, Marriages, Children Born, Exams Passed, Prosperity

So much PROOF, POPULARITY, POWER --- How can say Buddha NOT God?

IDOLS Very ALIVE in the FEARS of those who BELIEVE in THEM

Lived in Africa UGANDAN Friend came in Tears to say BROTHER DIED

HOW? Someone Left CURSE on Doorstep and he Stepped There and DIED

Can't Understand/Explain WHAT Happened but Friends Brother was DEAD

Eating Food given to IDOLS connects SOME to the DEMONIC World

It's JUST FOOD – No DEMONS live Inside – Cannot HURT Anyone

UNLESS the EATER Adds RELIGIOUS Devotion to their MEAL  
ALLEGIANCE to the DEMON Invites ATTACK from the DEMON

What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.  
1 Corinthians 10.19-21

The Gods of pagan worship are not gods in any full sense of that word; they are merely idols, man-made objects of worship. But behind these ‘copies’ are spiritual forces, which Paul calls ‘demons.’  
David Prior

### 3. Kept by God

#### a. Struggle

STRONG Not Tempted or Worried – Non-Existent god cannot HURT them

v. 7 However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. > A DEMON may NOT be God – but NOT NOTHING!

CONSCIENCE Lit =“to know with” used 32 X’s in NT –

Internal Court, Actions Judged, either Approved or Condemned

Conscience is NOT LAW – it BEARS WITNESS to God’s Moral Law

DEPENDS on Knowledge – Informed or Uninformed – Mature or Immature

Damaged, Seared, Defective, Fallen and Sinful – NOT a Perfect INDICATOR

Nothing in the context justifies an association of “weaker brothers” with those who are merely offended by a particular practice...even less justified is the “professional weaker brother” – the Christian legalist eager to forbid morally neutral activities even though he or she would never indulge in them...The weak brother is someone with a weak conscience who follows the example of someone’s liberty only to feel remorse for sinning against their conscience.

Craig Blomberg



b. **Security** – People who **STRUGGLE** look for **RITUALS / RULES** to Trust  
**SOME** Corinthians were **PROUD** of their Abstinence, Others of their Indulgence  
 v. 8 Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

**MEAT** in Corinth had **RELIGIOUS CONNOTATIONS**

Paul states **VIEW** of the **STRONG**

Morally **NEUTRAL** – No Spiritual Advantage to Eat, No Disadvantage to Not  
**KNOWLEDGE** allowed Them **ENJOY** All that **TASTY TEMPLE MEAT**  
**HOMES** – **TEMPLE RESTAURANTS** – **TEMPLE FEASTS!**

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10.31

Some people have the false notion that the **strong** Christians are the ones who live by rules and regulations and who get offended when others exercise their freedom in Christ; but such is not the case. It is the **weak** Christians who must have the security of law and who are afraid to use their freedom in Christ. It is the weak who are prone to judge and criticize the stronger believers and to stumble over what they do. This, of course, makes it difficult for the strong saints to minister to their weaker brothers and sisters. Warren Wiersbe

c. **Stumbling Block**

**Strong** Corinthians **NOT** Edifying **WEAK** > **EXALTING** Themselves

vs. 9-12 But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

Exercise of freedom should not become a stumbling-block to the weak.

For some SENSITIVE People – Long Established Habits – Get Re-Awakened  
 STRONG Words for What Happens to WEAKER Brother

DEFILE Conscience / Stumbling Block /Wound him / Destroy or RUIN him

By setting such an example will you ‘build up’ the weak brother? You will ‘build him up’ only to destruction!  
 R.C.H. Lenski

Sometimes you MUST Abstain To AVOID SINNING Against CHRIST

Paul learned VIVIDLY & POWERFULLY Christ is Connected to His People..

And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”  
 Acts 9.4

Believer is TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit > NO Temple is UNIMPORTANT

God LIVES in the WEAK Brother AND the STRONG SISTER

For SOME Seeing LEADERS Eat > EMBOLDEN them to Eat Agnst Conscience

“Stumbling Block” / “CAUSE to FALL” / thru EXERCISE of FREEDOM

Do NOT Demand RIGHTS that Will Ultimately CAUSE Fellow Xtians to SIN  
 FREEDOMS did Not build Up the Weak but led them to DESTRUCTIVE Sin

Stronger Christian can DEFER to Weak for a SEASON > help them GROW

NOT to Pamper them but PRESS them to GROWTH and MATURITY

STAYING at Same Position of WEAKNESS – BOTH will Stop GROWING

While it would not be true to say that the robust Christianity of the New Testament envisages the strong as permanently shackled by the weak, yet the strong must always act towards the weak with consideration and Christian love.

Leon Morris

And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’  
 Matthew 25.40

#### d. Servant

v. 13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

How COMMITTED are we to LOVING ONE ANOTHER?

How willing are we to SACRIFICE? ...even our RIGHTS...for our ENEMIES?

The apostles kept pursuing knowledge and people, thinking about the Scriptures and thinking about the lost. Is that true of you? As you are learning, are you still loving?  
Francis Chan

Knowledge makes us PROUD because it is focused on OURSELVES

LOVE is focused on OTHERS > You don't SOLVE Every Problem with LOGIC

More MATURE a Believer more Realize their Failures and Deep Need of Christ

If Education can make us PROUD – Knowledge of GOD Can Really PUFF UP

HUMILITY is a Pre-Requisite for REALLY Knowing God

Christian FAITH More KEEPING RULES > Relationship with God & People

In JESUS we are CHILDREN of the God who OWNS & RULES the WORLD

GOSPEL Exposes our IDOLS as POWERLESS, LIFELESS, EMPTY

Only when we PUT our FAITH in IDOLS that they are EMPOWERED Over Us

When KNOW World cannot SATISFY then you ENJOY World as Gift of God

See God's Image in Artists and God's Redemption Mirrored in His World

Not in Bondage of Slavery > FREEDOM in Christ Enjoy & Use World for GOD

But OUR Freedom should NOT lead Brother or Sister into BONDAGE & FEAR

Need to KNOW the PURPOSE of our RIGHTS > Advance the KINGDOM

SEPARATISM	SERVANTHOOD	SYNCRETISM
Isolates us from being Salt and Light in World	Identify with Jesus to serve World as He did	Integrate too much with World - no salt and light

Through fear the Weak would have forced the community into a self-imposed ghetto. Through a destructive use of freedom the Strong would have committed the church to a pattern of behavior indistinguishable from that of its environment. If either group had prevailed, the identity and mission of the church would have been gravely compromised. Paul's response was to focus the vision of the Corinthians on their roots in Christ and their responsibility to each other and to a wider world. His passionate prudence is a perfect illustration of how love builds up.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor

We Xtians Enjoy FREEDOM & RIGHTS because Someone gave His UP for US  
 Son of Man NOT Come to BE Served but SERVE & GIVE Life Ransom Many  
 STRONGEST Brother willingly became WEAKEST for OUR ETERNAL Good  
 ONE who holds ALL AUTHORITY willing Made Himself NOTHING for US  
 DIED to Save WHOLE Church – Glorious BRIDE – Global FAMILY of God

People ask “Why live in BJ when can Live in Hawaii?”

If LOVE Jesus you will LOVE & SERVE His BRIDE > Your FAMILY in Him  
 Want to SEE the WEAK made STRONG – WITNESS of GOSPEL Advance  
 Our RIGHTS take BackSEAT to GLORY of His Name & GOOD of His Church  
 GOSPEL made us SO FREE we can WAIT for HEAVEN to Enjoy All Things

Whether it is in the big things of life – marriage or singleness, career, where to live – or the smaller, almost unnoticed, choices of every day, Christ calls us to radical discipleship which denies self and picks up the cross to follow him, not out of duty but out of love.

David Jackman

1 Corinthians 8.<sup>1</sup> Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.<sup>2</sup> If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.<sup>3</sup> But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.”<sup>5</sup> For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—<sup>6</sup> yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.<sup>7</sup> However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.<sup>8</sup> Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.<sup>9</sup> But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.<sup>10</sup> For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?<sup>11</sup> And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.<sup>12</sup> Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.