Love Builds Up
1 Cor 8:1-13
SS Lesson for 07/13/2014

Devotional Scripture: 1 John 4:7-21

OUTLINE

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson examines how Love Builds Up. The study’s aim is to understand the principle that love, not knowledge, is to be our rule of life. The study’s application is to use this principle in every issue of life, especially when our actions will affect other believers and their consciences. (From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary).

Key Verse: 1 Cor 8:9

9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Paul’s reply to the Corinthians’ question concerning the propriety of eating the meat of an animal offered in a pagan sacrifice touched off an extensive response, probably because he sensed that this particular issue was another manifestation of the Corinthians’ self-centeredness, which produced other similar problems in the church. Two words which seemed to epitomize the Corinthians’ point of view were “freedom” (eleutheros, 9:1, 19; eleutheria, 10:29) and “rights” (exousia, 8:9; 9:4-6, 12, 18). Paul used and qualified these words in these chapters by stressing the importance of a love for others which sought their “good” (sympherōos, 10:24, 33; 12:7; cf. 6:12) by “strengthening” or “building” them up (oikodomeōia, 8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26). These two themes, “me first” or “you first,” and Paul’s development of them as they affected believers in relation to pagan worship and Christian worship, unified these chapters. Secondary Paul showed that the former attitude ultimately brought God’s disapproval (adokimos, 9:27) and His discipline (10:5-10; 11:30-32). Ordinarily the Greeks and Romans burned the less desirable portions of an animal in the course of their sacrifices and retained the choicer parts for personal consumption at banquets celebrating the sacrifices. If a sacrifice were made in connection with a state function, the meat which remained was frequently sold in the marketplace. The Corinthians’ questions apparently concerned (a) the acceptability of buying and eating meat from one of these sacrificial animals; (b) the acceptability of eating this meat as an invited guest in a friend’s home; (c) the acceptability of attending one of these pagan sacrifices and enjoying the meal of celebration which followed in the temple precincts. Paul spoke to each of these issues.

Paul struck right to the heart of the matter in these preliminary verses by stating a basic principle: love is superior to knowledge (cf. chap. 13). Much as he had begun his reply on marital questions, Paul may have quoted a Corinthian sentiment (we all possess knowledge) with which he basically agreed but which required qualification. Knowledge was essential in correctly responding to their questions but those who thought they had it did not, as Paul would show. In the first place, knowledge about God was always partial (13:12). In the second place, true knowledge led to God and a love for Him which Paul knew must issue in love for others (cf. 1 John 4:20-21). With the principle stated it now remained to be applied to the particular instance in question. The statements which follow the two thats (an idol is nothing at all and there is no God but One) may well have been Corinthian affirmations with which Paul could wholeheartedly agree. An “idol” indeed was “nothing” (Ps. 115:4-8), for there is only one God (Deut. 4:35, 39). Hence eating food sacrificed to idols was, in itself, inconsequential. The pantheon of the Greeks and Romans, not to mention the gods and lords of the mystery religions, were indeed numerous, but one God alone is real (Deut. 10:17). The Father is the source of all (Gen. 1:1) and the One for whom the Corinthians should live (1 Cor. 10:31). The Lord Jesus Christ was the agent of Creation (Col. 1:16) and the One through whom the Corinthians lived (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:23). If all Corinthian Christians could have agreed that an idol was nothing and that there was only one God (v. 4), then they might have eaten the idol meat with impunity. However, such was not the case. All, in fact, did not possess knowledge. The conscience of some Christians was not strengthened on this point by the truth. They were still ignorant and had not come to the point where they could accept eating this kind of meat as a matter of indifference. For them it was wrong, and so to eat it was sin (cf. Rom. 14:23). Paul denied the validity of their scruples, but in the advice which followed he suggested that the solution would be found in love, not in knowledge. When knowledge uninformed by love dictated one’s behavior, Paul warned that spiritual harm would result. The exercise of... freedom by the knowledgeable could in certain circumstances become an obstacle, a stumbling block in the weak Christian’s walk with God (cf. v. 13).
an illustration Paul posed a situation in which a weak Christian saw a knowledgeable brother enjoying a meal in an idol’s temple and was by this example encouraged to join in, even though he could not do so with the clear conscience before God that the knowledgeable Christian enjoyed. As a consequence the conscience of this weak believer was seared (cf. 1 Tim. 4:2), and his capacity to distinguish right from wrong was lost (cf. Titus 1:15) leading to his spiritual ruin and physical death (cf. 1 Cor. 10:9-10; Rom. 14:15). Apollytai, rendered is destroyed, often refers to physical death (e.g., Matt. 2:13; Acts 5:37). The selflessness of Christ was an example for the knowledgeable. If Christ loved this brother so that he was willing to give up His exalted rights and even His life (Phil. 2:6, 8), surely the strong could give up his right to eat such meat. To be arrogantly indifferent to the need of weaker Christians results in sin not only against them (for you... wound their weak conscience; cf. v. 7) but also against Christ of whose body they are members (12:26-27; cf. 1:30; Matt. 25:40, 45). Paul experienced this point acutely on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:4-5). In summary Paul stressed the priority of brotherly love. He did not demand that the knowledgeable relinquish their right, but he illustrated how he would apply the principle to himself. Paul did not want any brother to fall (cf. v. 9) but to be “built up” (cf. v. 1), and knowledge governed by love accomplished that.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

This passage concerns issues that are sometimes called "questionable practices." We all will run into such issues as we live the Christian life in the context of the community of believers. They arise when we face choices about behavior and there does not seem to be a black-and-white biblical injunction to follow. In the days of the Corinthian church, one of these issues was going to pagan temples, perhaps for meetings of guilds or other associations. Dinner would be served there, and often the meat that was served had been sacrificed to an idol god. Should a Christian partake of such meat and sit at such a meeting? The solution Paul laid out was interesting. He took this kind of question off the conceptual level—it is not a matter of right and wrong. And he put it on the relational level—for the sake of the community of believers, we must make our decision about such questionable practices based on what is best for building up other believers. We must act in love. There are two extremes to avoid. The first is legalism, in which we erect a man-made law not found explicitly in Scripture. The second is license, in which we do whatever we want to do with no concern for the sensibilities of others in the body of Christ. So Paul instructed us not to use our liberty so that it becomes a stumbling block to others. The liberty he referred to is the permission to indulge in something that the Scripture does not clearly prohibit-like eating meat sacrificed to an idol. An idol is nothing; so to eat such meat was nothing to some (1 Cor. 8:4). However, this liberty must not be exercised if it causes another believer to also indulge but to do so against his weaker conscience. A stumbling block is a hindrance, an obstacle. It is contrary to the principle of love in the body to lead someone to do something that weakens him, harms his relationship with God, and causes a setback in spiritual growth—even if I have liberty in my own conscience to do something. I must therefore be circumspect and careful with regard to my choices in the realm of questionable practices. I must always be sensitive to how my actions may influence someone else who may not have the same kind of background and conscience that I do. And I also must be careful not to judge others who may have greater strength of conscience than I do. I do not want to become a judgmental legalist, either. The whole goal is to make my decisions based on love—what will build up others in the body of Christ.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The outline of the lesson came from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

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**Lesson Introduction and Background**

**From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

People decorate their homes to project a certain image, and this is often carefully planned and executed. With this in mind, I have been surprised over the years to find many Christian homes using pagan idols as decorative elements. A recent trend is to decorate with an Asian theme and include a figure of a chubby, smiling Buddha.

Some Buddhists reject the idea that they are idol worshippers, claiming to use the statues only as an aid for their prayers and acts of devotion to the Buddha. But this understanding is similar to the idol worship in the Greek cities of Paul's world. When a citizen of Corinth went to the temple of Apollo to worship, he did not believe that the statue in the temple was the actual god Apollo; rather, he believed that it represented a spiritual reality behind the statue. The idol served as a point of contact and focus with the god. Christians don't include statuettes of the Buddha in their decorating scheme with the intent of doing Buddhist worship. They believe these idols are harmless, inert objects. Yet more than once I have been in a home where a statuette of the Buddha had a little pan in front of it, and incense had been burned in the pan. This bothered me. It is too much like the Buddhist shrines I have seen in Myanmar, where incense is burned as a real act of worship by real Buddhists who believe the idol represents a real god. Buddha statuettes, native American worship art, zodiac symbols, tiki carvings—should we view decorating with idol artifacts as being no more than innocent acts of chic ornamentation? Can we play with idols without causing problems for ourselves or others?

The Corinth of Paul's day featured many temples devoted to the worship of fictitious deities. These temples hosted religious festivals at various times when wealthy patrons would bring animals to be sacrificed. In the process, the carcasses of these animals would be divided three ways. A small portion would be burned as an offering in the temple. Another portion would be reserved for the priests or priestesses of the temple. The biggest portion, though, would be made available to the public at large, who could dine on the meat free of charge at the festival meal. Leftover meat might be available for purchase in a butcher shop associated with a temple. For the poor of the city, the chance to eat meat was an opportunity to be seized. Meat was expensive and not normally available to the lower classes. The pleasure of such a rare treat could override any pangs of conscience about hanging out at a pagan temple in order to get a meal that included meat that had been sacrificed to a pagan god or goddess. This seems to be the main issue in 1 Corinthians 8, the focus of this week's lesson. (The issue of private, at-home eating of meat that had been purchased at the pagan temple's butcher shop seems to be more the context of Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 10, next week's lesson.) No one in the Corinthian church claimed it was permissible to participate in the rituals of the pagan temples by taking an animal there for sacrifice. The question concerned the surplus of meat generated through these rituals: was its consumption an accommodation with paganism? Before we dive into this issue, we should revisit the deliberations of the famous Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. There, Paul had met with other Christian leaders some five years before he wrote 1 Corinthians. The chief issue discussed was circumcision for Gentiles, which the council decided was unnecessary. Often overlooked, however, is that the council also instructed Gentile Christians to "abstain from food sacrificed to idols" (Acts 15:29). Therefore this was not a new issue.

**Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

**Build Up through Love (1 Cor 8:1-3)**

1 Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. 2 And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. 3 But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

**Love that edifies (1)**

*Love edifies because without love everything else is nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-2)*

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
Love edifies because love grows when Christians work in unity (Ephesians 4:16)
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.

Love edifies because love does no harm (Romans 13:10)
10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Love edifies because true faith expresses itself through love (Galatians 5:6)
6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Love edifies because love covers sin (1 Peter 4:8)
8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Love that is humble (2)

Love that is humble allows the association with all people (Rom 12:16)
16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Love that is humble bears with one another (Eph 4:2)
2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Love that is humble is perfected (Col 3:12-14)
12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Love that is humble leads to inheriting a blessing (1 Peter 3:8-9)
8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Love that is humble seeks the interest of others over self (Phil 2:3-4)
3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Love that is humble shows godly wisdom (James 3:13)
13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Love that represents being known by God (3)

When God knows us, His presence goes with us (Ex 33:12-14)
12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." 14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."
Gods knows everything about us, so He knows exactly what we should do and what we actually do (Ps 139:1-6)

1 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. 5 You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Because God knows us, He makes His voice and words known to us as well (John 10:14-16)

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

If God knows us then we shouldn't turn back to sin (Galatians 4:9)

9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

Our foundation in God rests on Him knowing us (2 Timothy 2:19)

19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

Build Up through Knowledge (1 Cor 8:4-6)

4 Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.
5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

Knowledge that there is only one God (4-5)

We must acknowledge that there is but one God and no other (Deuteronomy 4:39)

39 Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.

God is one even though He manifests Himself in the Trinity (Deuteronomy 6:4)

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Because God is one, He is over all (Ephesians 4:6)

6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

There is only one God and He justifies all men (Rom 3:28-30)

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. 29 Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

There is only one God and He created us (Mal 2:10)

10 Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?
Knowledge that there is only one Jesus (6)

There is only one Jesus and He is the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5)
5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

It was prophesied that there would be only one Lord Jesus (Zech 14:9)
9 The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

Just as there is only one body of God and one Spirit, there is only one Lord Jesus (Eph 4:4-5)
4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Jesus is only name and person to whom everyone will eventually bow (Phil 2:9-11)
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus is the only One through whom salvation is found (Acts 4:12)
12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Build Up through Freedom (1 Cor 8:7-13)

7 However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.
8 But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.
9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.
10 For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?
11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?
12 But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.
13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Freedom but having a sensitive conscience (7-8)

Offended, Uncomfortable, or ...? (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

I do not care for tattoos. Yet my two adult daughters each have one. My son-in-law has more than one. Does that offend me? No. Do I have a weak conscience in this area that makes tattoos a stumbling block to me? No. They do not even make me as uncomfortable as they used to. A flower painted on a foot, a dolphin painted on the back, or a cross painted on the leg do not violate Leviticus 19:28. Those tattoos do nothing to undermine my faith in Christ or my love for my family members who choose to have them. But you may be different. You may find tattoos, certain kinds of music, etc., to be offensive when I do not. But let’s keep our terminology straight: what is “offensive” is not necessarily a “tumbling block” that is traced to a weak conscience. And your discomfort may be the price you pay when someone else is being ministered to by music you don’ like. There are doctrinal lines that should never be crossed. Then there are issues of preference that may be crossed freely as long as they don’ lead to sin. It is important to learn the difference. As we do, we also remember to practice the grace of humility and kindness. The gospel will move forward in unexpected ways when we do.

A sensitive conscience is one that regards other’s convictions (Rom 14:14)

14 As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.
A sensitive conscience is one that does not judge another’s conscience (1 Cor 10:28-29)

28 But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience’ sake—29 the other man’s conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another’s conscience?

A sensitive conscience is one that realizes that there are many different doctrines (Rom 14:5-8)

5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

A sensitive conscience is one that does not look down on others, but is concerned about every individual (Matt 18:10-13)

10 “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. 12 "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13 And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.

Freedom but not being a stumbling block (9-10)

Not being a stumbling block through not judging others (Rom 14:13)

13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.

Not being a stumbling block to those who are weak in the faith (Rom 14:2-3)

2 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him.

Not being a stumbling block through bearing with other's failures (Romans 15:1)

1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Not being a stumbling block through seeking the good of the many (1 Corinthians 10:32-33)

32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God- 33 even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Not being a stumbling block through serving others (Galatians 5:13)

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Freedom but do not sin (11-13)

Freedom Isn't Free (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Those of us who grew up in Western democracies undoubtedly remember singing all those patriotic songs from childhood. Those songs often echoed a common theme: the value and cost of freedom. We know that free nations do not achieve their freedom easily. Wars were fought. Our spiritual, eternal freedom also came at a high cost: the death of the Son of God. Most everyone also knows that the existence of democratic liberties does not mean we have absolute freedom to do just anything we wish. How many children cannot wait until that eighteenth birthday, graduation, or departure for college as they ponder the freedom they think they will have! Eventually, that young adult realizes that this freedom has continuing price tags attached. One of those tags is lawful behavior. Spiritual liberty also has continuing price tags, as 1 Corinthians 8:9 demonstrates. Also vital is Galatians 5:13: “You …were
called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.”

Considering the price that Christ paid, is what he asks really so burdensome?

Even if we are allowed to do things, it doesn’t always mean we should (1 Corinthians 6:12)

12 “Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything.

Not sinning by doing nothing that cannot be spoken of as righteous (Rom 14:15-16)

15 If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. 16 Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil.

Do not sin in freedom by standing firm in the faith (Gal 5:1)

5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Do not sin in freedom by showing proper respect to others (1 Peter 2:16-17)

6 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Do not sin in freedom by not giving Satan a foothold (Eph 4:25-27)

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin “: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts From Bob Deffinbaugh

Paul sets the stage for his teaching on meats offered to idols in verses 1-3. In these three verses, addressed to those who prided themselves for their higher knowledge and who indulged themselves in the name of liberty, Paul lays down four foundational truths which they need to grasp. If these truths were understood and applied, the error of these libertines would be recognized as such and abandoned.

(1) Christian knowledge is common knowledge, available to all. There was an ancient heresy known as gnosticism which plagued the early church. Gnostics prided themselves in possessing knowledge not known by all. This secret knowledge was not found in Scripture, but outside of biblical revelation, and it was handed down orally to those “in the know.” Paul denies that there is any such knowledge outside of the Scriptures and known by the spiritually elite. He writes, “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge” (1 Corinthians 8:1a). Knowledge is not restricted to the few but is available to all. In the Book of Proverbs, error and deceptive knowledge is personified by “Madam Folly.” This woman is symbolized by the prostitute, who appeals not to the head but to the hormones; she appeals to fleshly pride and sensual desires. Her appeal is secret and sneaky. She lurks in the dark alleys, and she whispers her offer of illicit knowledge (Proverbs 7:6-27). Truth and wisdom is personified in Proverbs by a gracious and intelligent woman, Dame Wisdom. She publicly proclaims truth to all who will hear and learn, speaking openly in broad daylight and in the most public place (see Proverbs 8:1-21). True knowledge is offered to all, while false wisdom is secretly and seductively presented to the naive.

(2) Even true knowledge, which is wrongly interpreted or applied, can puff up the pride of the knower, while genuine love places others ahead of self and seeks to build them up.25 The “knowledge” which these “stronger” Corinthian brethren possessed was producing the wrong effect. True love is not puffed up with pride, and it does not serve self-interest (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Knowledge is not opposed to love, but is to be closely associated with it, as we can see in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 13:2; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Ephesians 3:19; Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 1:9; Colossians 2:2; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:10; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 John 1:1; 2 John 1:3).
(3) Those who suppose themselves to fully know only reveal their true ignorance (verse 2). Our knowledge in this life is partial, and even that which has been revealed by God is never perfectly grasped (see 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). Those who speak arrogantly of what they know are ignorant and self-deceived, often deceiving others as well (Romans 1:28-32; 2:17-23; Galatians 1:8; Colossians 2:18; 1 Timothy 1:7; 2 Peter 2:17-19). In 1 Corinthians, Paul does not hesitate to tell us when he is speaking the command of the Lord (7:10; 14:37), and neither does he fail to tell us when he is speaking his personal opinions or convictions (7:6, 25, 40). Over-confidence is often an indication of ignorance, while humility is the outgrowth of knowledge.

(4) Christians are not to boast in knowing, but to rejoice in being known by God, and this is the result of loving God (verse 3). When Jesus sent His disciples out to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God, they returned, rejoicing over the mighty works God had accomplished through them. Jesus gently corrected them saying, “… do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Here, Paul tells Christians that they should not rejoice in knowing, but in being known by God. Salvation surpasses any sheepskin (diploma) we will ever obtain. Moreover, the way that we are known by God is not because of our knowledge, but because of the love which God has produced within us for Himself. Once again, love takes priority over knowledge. What a humbling truth Paul has put before these all-knowing, stronger saints. If knowledge was the most important thing of all, and if they knew more than others, than they were the spiritual elite. But they have sought to excel in a category which is subordinate to love.

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**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

1. Knowledge without love swells the head but shrinks the heart (I Cor. 8:1)
2. Knowledge, partial at best, is not enough to decide every spiritual issue (vss. 2-3)
3. In reality, there is only one true God (vss. 4-6)
4. The loving Christian realizes that there are various levels of spiritual maturity (vs. 7)
5. Freedom in Christ is no excuse for causing a weaker brother to sin against his untrained conscience (vss. 8-11)
6. Beware—to cause another to sin is to sin against both him and Christ (vss. 12-13)