

To Eat, or Not to Eat

Key Verse: “Meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.”

—**I Corinthians 8:8,9**

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 8:1-13

heathen, that they were nothing in God's sight. This realization also meant that there was no effect, positive or negative, to eating meat that had been offered to an idol.

In this lesson, Paul tells the newly enlightened brethren in Corinth that “as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. . . . We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.” (I Cor. 8:1,4) To further emphasize his point, he states that even Jesus, whom he preached, does not occupy the same position as God, saying, “There is but one God, the Father, of whom are

THE PEOPLE OF CORINTH,

a Gentile city in Greece, were steeped in superstition and the traditions revolving around the worship of heathen gods. So all-inclusive was their tendency in this direction that it was very common to have food offered to the gods for their blessing prior to eating. As the Gospel of Christ was preached, and its accompanying message of Truth spread throughout the Gentile world through Paul, the “apostle of the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:13), those accepting the message of Truth soon began to realize the true nature of the many idols and gods of the

all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” (vs. 6) Paul thus concludes that since idols represent absolutely nothing, having no power whatsoever, and that the gods they represent also are nothing, those who have this knowledge should not be concerned one way or another about eating meat that may have been offered to an idol. The meat is no better or worse, whether offered or not offered, to an idol.

Having come to this conclusion, however, Paul states concerning some, particularly those new in the faith, “There is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.” (vs. 7) In other words, some who had seen the Truth, and saw the falsehoods of the heathen gods when compared to the Gospel of the true and living God, were so repulsed by the thought of any association with idols that they wanted to have nothing at all to do with anything that might even have been remotely connected with such things. In their spiritual immaturity, though, they failed to appreciate the further Truth that an idol meant nothing, and any meat offered to an idol was not affected for good or bad. Yet Paul, in the Key Verse, counsels those who have a more complete understanding of their liberty to eat, that they “take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak.”—vs. 9

Paul concludes this important lesson by telling us that in cases where our exercise of liberty in Christ might stumble others who are less mature, it would be a sin to offend their weak conscience, even stating that it would be considered a “sin against Christ.” (vs. 12) “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” (vs. 13) What an example of brotherly love is thus expressed in these words! ■