

Knowing God

“Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. If any one supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if any one loves God, he is known by Him.” 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 (NASB).

It's difficult to follow Paul's logic here. Paul begins by talking about idolatry, but gives this brief interlude about knowledge and love, then continues talking about idolatry for the rest of chapter eight. How can knowledge make us arrogant and love edify in relation to idolatry?

First, Paul is not saying they stop learning, as if he were saying, *Knowledge makes you arrogant, therefore stop gaining knowledge*. What Paul is really after in this chapter is the purposes for which the church in Corinth used their knowledge. The church in Corinth had Christians who had once worshiped false gods but converted to Christianity. As a result, they could not eat meat sacrificed to idols without sincerely thinking that they were eating something to please one of the gods. However, Paul points out, idols are not really gods. There is only one true God. This knowledge, the knowledge of one true God and the lie of idolatry, caused Christians not to show love to one another. But, we should ask, isn't this the knowledge we're all striving toward? A knowledge of the one true God? Yes, but not in the way they thought.

Because some Christians understood that an idol was nothing, they ate the meat without violating their conscience. It was meat and nothing more. However, the converts who were once idolaters couldn't eat meat without violating their conscience because their old beliefs were still strong in their minds. Paul calls them weak for this in verse 11. Does this mean that those who were eating without violating their conscience were strong? No, Paul calls them arrogant for their knowledge of God. What Paul is saying, and what makes this interlude make sense, is that certain Corinthians knew *about* the one true God, but they didn't *know* the one true God. If they actually knew God, they would love and edify, not violate a fellow Christian's conscience in order to eat something tasty.

When we know God, not just about His existence, and what He's done and continues to do, love is the natural response. God is love. If our focus is on Him, then our focus will also be on others as well. Let us, then, for the sake of our fellow Christians, not focus on *what* we know but on *Who* we know in order to love one another and edify one another.

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