

Foundations Bible Study – I Corinthians
Lesson 3

Scripture Reading:

- I Corinthians Chapters 8 through 11

Lesson

Let's begin this lesson by saying there are a lot of things stated in the letters of Paul that are hard to understand for us today. We have several in this lesson's readings. That is not to say that we can not learn from Paul writing to the Corinthians, after all we believe as Christians that the Bible is God's word for us today. So we will together give it a try. If you have any questions or comments about things not mentioned in the study please use the last discussion question to reply. It will be interesting to see what you all have to say about what I leave out.

I want to start with 8:1-3. Not to talk about what you should or shouldn't eat, but at this concept Paul shares about knowledge. Paul is big on education, after all he was highly educated himself. What Paul is saying I think is very important. Sometimes I, and maybe you, tend to think we know enough about the Bible and the faith that we are... well... judgmental snobs. Here Paul warns us about this. Knowledge should not offend people, or judge them in any way. All our Christian life must be lived out with love as the ultimate guide. Next week we will look at chapter 13, the love chapter, we can share more then. But for this week we all need to learn how to balance our knowledge and the love of God when we deal with others. How do you do that?

Next I want to share about the concept of freedom Paul is talking about. (9:19-23 & 10:23-11:1) We in the USA talk much about freedom, but what do we really know about it? Most all of us have never spent time in a place where we were not free. And we tend to use the term in a patriotic way. Paul is speaking to Jews and other religious faith that lived with some very strict rules for living. In Christ we are free from two important things. First sin, in Christ we have the power to overcome sin in our lives... thus we can be free from the sins that weigh us down. Also we are free from the bonds of religious rule and regulations. These folks Paul is speaking to have lost personal and religious freedoms. They have been bound by strict rules that made their lives very difficult. Here we find that all things are possible with Christ, but there is a very important part that needs to be remembered. "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."(10:23) Also look closely at verse 24. Freedom always comes with responsibilities, especially in the faith of Christ!!!

Then comes the big and loving concept found in verse 10:32. I have heard this over and over again, but it is very, very important. We are not to be the stumbling

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block for others. I really don't like this at all. This seems to take all the fun out of this freedom stuff. That means I have to think of others instead of myself. Even become a slave to others. (10:19) Wow....

Sounds like Jesus Christ.....

All this freedom stuff and watching out for others take a lot of work. Paul addresses this in a metaphor of running a race and winning the prize. As one trains for a race it takes discipline and commitment. Paul believes we need the same in our Christian life. We need practice and coaches and teammates and fans. Mostly one needs to decide and commit to the Christian life. It takes much work and much Well... sacrifice. We need each other, we need the church, to help get prepared and endure this race we call life.

Finally I want to address what Paul says about the sacrament of communion. Most scholars agree something is going on here. Why is Paul so... judgmental and hard on the church in Corinth? I don't know and neither does anyone else. But it does seem from the text that in Corinth the rich were served food (at Wednesday night dinners) and communion first then the poor. Fact is sometimes the poor lost out. Paul knew that was not right! It also may have been that someone was in charge of evaluating who could take communion. So Paul says, it is a personal issue, examine yourself, and Paul wants communion to be served to all. Not using physical or spiritual riches as a measuring stick to keep folks away from the Lord's Table, but to ALL!

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. How do you balance knowledge and love in your life?
2. Paul says we are not to be a stumbling block to others. How do we do that?
3. How do you serve as a slave to others? (10:19)
4. What are some of the things you do to practice for the race of life?