

**Notes on the Greek New Testament**  
**Day 225 – August 13<sup>th</sup> – 1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

**Works frequently referenced in these notes on 1 Corinthians**

John Drane	<i>Paul</i> , Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
Leon Morris	<i>The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians</i> , Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ed., IVP, Leicester, 1985
Anthony C Thistleton	<i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000

**1 Corinthians 8:1ff**

Thistleton argues that 8:1-11:1 forms a single, coherent section which he entitles, *Questions About Meat Associated With Idols And The Priority Of Love Over 'Rights.'*

**Verse 1**

Περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων, οἶδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γινώσκιν ἔχομεν. ἡ γινῶσις φυσιοῦ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ.

The opening phrase of this verse indicates that Paul is dealing with another matter which had been raised by the Corinthians in their letter. In this and subsequent verses Paul deals with two subjects: eating meals in idols' temples (part of the social fabric of the day), and eating meat (and other food) that may have been offered to an idol.

"The idol temple seems to have served both as a butchers shop and as a place for sharing a cultic meal." Blue

Murphy-O'Connor observes, "About the only time that meat came on the market was after pagan festivals, and it had been part of the victims sacrificed to the gods." The wealthy could always afford to eat meat, but the poor would have fewer opportunities, many of which would have been handouts after pagan festivities.

εἰδωλοθυτον, ου n meat offered to idols  
 πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας  
 γινῶσις, εως f knowledge, understanding

Paul is quoting another Corinthian slogan, perhaps a catchphrase of the 'strong' by which they boasted of their knowledge which allowed them to eat meat offered to idols without qualms since *they knew (didn't all?)* that idols were nothing.

φυσιοῦ cause conceit/arrogance; pass be  
 conceited/arrogant  
 οἰκοδομεῶ build, build up, encourage

"Rather than seeking to demonstrate some individualistic assertion of freedom or even victory, love seeks the welfare of the other. Hence if the 'strong' express love, they will show active concern that 'the weak' are not precipitated into situations of bad conscience, remorse, unease, or stumbling (see προσκομμα in 13:7,9). Rather, the one who loves the other will consider the effect of his or her own attitudes and actions upon 'weaker' brothers and sisters. This is precisely the theology of the church as Christ's 'body' which Paul will expound in 12:21-24." Thistleton

**Verse 2**

εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἐγνωκέναι τι, οὐπω ἔγνω καθὼς δεῖ γινῶναι·

δοκεῶ see 7:40

ἐγνωκέναι Verb, perf act infin γινωσκῶ

"The γινῶσις claimed by some or by many at Corinth was a different kind of 'knowledge' from that which Paul understands by the same word." Thistleton

οὐπω not yet

ἔγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s γινωσκῶ

δει impersonal verb it is necessary, must, should, ought

"The use of the perfect infinitive (ἐγνωκεναι) signifies that the Corinthians, or some of them, perceive themselves as having achieved a present state of 'having come to know,' i.e., having achieved knowledge. By contrast the ingressive use of the aorist (ἔγνω) represents Paul's correction: he or she has not yet come to know. The aorist infinitive γινῶναι, which follows καθὼς δεῖ (as it is necessary, or as they ought), expands the contrast." Thistleton

**Verse 3**

εἰ δέ τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν θεόν, οὗτος ἔγνωσται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

Thistleton comments, "p<sup>46</sup> and Clement of Alexandria omit τὸν θεόν, as well as ὑπ' αὐτοῦ. This makes excellent sense in the context. The verb ἔγνωσται may be construed either as middle (expressing personal interest or the involvement of the subject of the verb in a reflexive sense) or as a passive (known). To retain the ambiguity, we may translate the shorter text: but if anyone loves, he or she has experienced true 'knowing.' Thus κ\* and 33 also omit ὑπ' αὐτοῦ. Conzelmann describes this shorter reading as 'a very pregnant text'; Fee observes that 'this shorter text brings Paul's point home so powerfully that it is most likely what he originally wrote'; and Spicq considers it 'very probably authentic.'" However, the textual evidence for the shorter reading is weak.

ἔγνωσται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γινωσκω

"Love, rather than knowledge, should be the Christian's determining consideration" Morris What is of chief importance is not our knowledge but that we are known of God (cp. 2 Tim 2:19; Gal 4:9). "The only perfect knowledge, both loving and practical, is given by God... To be known by God means to belong to him... chosen by God... Could there have been a more sure way of showing that this love is really possible than by showing that God himself truly communicated it?" Spicq

**Verse 4**

Περὶ τῆς βρώσεως οὖν τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἶδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ, καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἶς.

βρωσις, εως f food, eating, a meal  
εἰδωλοθυτον, ου see v. 1

"A whole variety of situations may be implied by the phrase, ranging from meat purchased at a butcher's shop which originated from a temple as wholesale supplier to attendance at festivals where meat was available to the poorer classes, probably after a pagan 'blessing' or 'dedication,' or eating in a dining room attached to the temple (cf. J. Murphy-O'Connor), to eating on formal civic occasions 'presided over' by one or more pagan deities." Thistleton  
Furthermore, "Meat was given away to the poor by the well-to-do on religious holidays in honour of one false god or another." Blasi

In what follows, Paul would appear to be quoting some at Corinth and saying 'we share your knowledge that ...'

οὐδεις, οὐδεμια, οὐδεν no one, nothing;  
οὐδεν not at all  
εἰδωλον, ου n idol

Exegetes and grammarians are divided over whether οὐδὲν εἶδωλον should be construed as attributive ('no idol [exists]') or as predicative ('an idol is nothing...').

**Verse 5**

καὶ γὰρ εἴπερ εἰσὶν λεγόμενοι θεοὶ εἴτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἴτε ἐπὶ γῆς, ὡς περ εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί,

εἴπερ since, if it is true that  
εἴτε if, whether  
γῆ, γῆς f earth  
ὡς περ as, even as

Thistleton suggests that the first part of the verse is a quotation from the Corinthians and the second part Paul's rejoinder. "The strong at Corinth asserted an ontological and existential monotheism in which the so-called (λεγόμενοι) gods were non-existent nothings. Paul endorses their ontological monotheism. Even if these 'so-called gods' have power over people's lives, they are not gods or God. Only God is God. Nevertheless, the fact that *kyrios*-cults do really exist means that habitual patterns of loyalty and devotion long practiced by new converts before their conversion cannot simply be brushed aside as no longer affecting their lives and attitudes in the present. At an existential and psychological level they still leave their mark... Indeed, this may mean even more. Not only do they retain a subjective influence; they may also constitute objective forces of evil which bring destruction, disintegration and pain. Unless we adopt a partition theory between 8:1-11 and 10:14-22, Paul appears to associate them with demonic forces."

**Verse 6**

ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἰς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἰς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

Here again we may have a confessional catchphrase from Corinth in which ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα could mean that all things, including the meat offered to supposed idols, is in fact from God and can be received with thanksgiving.

On the other hand, Dunn argues that here is Paul developing the OT Shema (Deut 6:4) and adding a Christological dimension. This early creedal formulation stresses not only monotheism but "the unity of creation and salvation, to prevent a spilt in the Corinthians' thinking between their experience of power and their attitude to the material world... The Lord through whom salvation comes is the Lord through whom all things come... Salvation for us means that we live *for* the one God from whom are all things and *through* the one Lord..."

Thistleton says, "The argument of 'the strong' that since idols are nothings and one God alone has being is accepted; but it is not accepted as an argument for lovelessly ignoring the anxieties of 'the weak'. For all things, including Christian experience, take their origin from God as a gift, and since the one God is the goal of our existence, the means by which this comes about is that it is the one Lord Jesus Christ through whom all things come, and he is the means of our existence. Christ-likeness and the shape of the cross mark all that Christian believers are and do. Nevertheless, the argument of 'the weak' that forces of evil still hold sway is equally qualified by the reminder that in common Christian confession all things, even all food, take their origin from God and that we cannot drive a wedge between creation and redemption so as to live in a ghetto, for it is through one Lord Jesus Christ that all things (the world of creation and the blessings of salvation) come."

πατηρ, πατρος m father

The way the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are spoken of together here is a clear indication of the deity of Christ.

### Verse 7

Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ γινῶσις· τινὲς δὲ τῇ συνηθείᾳ ἕως ἄρτι τοῦ εἰδώλου ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον ἐσθίουσιν, καὶ ἡ συνειδησις αὐτῶν ἀσθενῆς οὐσα μολύνεται.

γινῶσις, εως f knowledge, understanding  
συνηθεια, ας f custom, practice

A rare word in the NT, occurring only here, 11:16 and in Jn 18:39. Later MSS read συνειδησει which is easily explained as an assimilation to the subsequent use of conscience in the last clause of the verse.

ἕως until, as far as

ἄρτι now, at the present

εἶδωλον, ου n idol

εἰδωλοθυτον, ου n meat offered to idols

"*Habituated* attitudes, stances, and patterns of behaviour (τῇ συνηθείᾳ [cf. συν + ἦθος] or force of habit still persist in conditioning the outlooks and feelings of some (τινες) even now (ἕως ἄρτι, *right up to the present*). Hence they act as an actual εἰδωλοθυτον, i.e., *as if it had been sacrificed to an idol as an actual reality*; even if their head, but not their heart, tells them differently." Thistleton

ἐσθιω and ἐσθω eat, consume

"If the context of the eating happens to be an actual cultic meal to which a wealthy Christian patron has invited his poorer 'client,' then 'the strong' may cause actual damage which genuinely taints, *pollutes, stains, soils* or *defiles* (μολυνω) the 'weaker' brother or sister in Christ." Thistleton

συνειδησις, εως f conscience, awareness  
ἀσθενῆς, ες sick, weak, helpless

"Yeo's observations about 'the strong' as those with 'social power, influence, political status and wealth' but also including 'a traditional Roman value ... of ability or competence in a variety of areas' seems to clinch the argument. 'The weak,' conversely, are not only 'of low social standing' but as part of a nondescript 'mass of undifferentiated citizens' crave for identity and for recognition and acceptance by 'the strong.' If 'the strong' set an agenda, 'the weak' may be seduced into doing almost anything to gain what they seek, while compounding their own confusions and inner tensions by feeling the 'wrongness' of it all at the same time. Their integrity has been compromised, polluted, or tainted." Thistleton

μολυνω defile, make unclean

### Verse 8

βρῶμα δὲ ἡμᾶς οὐ παραστήσει τῷ θεῷ· οὔτε γὰρ ἐὰν φάγωμεν, περισσεύομεν, οὔτε ἐὰν μὴ φάγωμεν, ὑστερούμεθα.

βρωμα, τος n food, solid food

παραστήσει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s

παριστημι present, bring into the presence of

Is the sense 'commend' or 'condemn'? Jeremias and Murphy-O'Connor think the latter is the meaning and Thistleton follows this suggestion, translating the phrase 'food will not bring us into God's judgment.' They think it to be a catchphrase of the 'strong.' The οὔτε introduces Paul's rejoinder. Yeo goes further and suggests that Paul, by adding οὔτε reverses the force of a 'gnostic' campaign motto of the 'strong' ἐὰν μὴ φάγωμεν ὑστερούμεθα, ἐὰν φάγωμεν περισσεύομεν: *their* principle was 'if we do not eat, we fall prey to lack; if we do eat, we abound.'

οὔτε not, nor (οὔτε ... οὔτε neither ... nor)  
 φάγωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl ἐσθίω  
 ὑστερεῶ lack, fall short of; pass be lacking  
 περισσεύω excel, have plenty (here  
 perhaps, 'gives us no advantage')

### Verse 9

βλέπετε δὲ μή πως ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν αὐτῆ  
 πρόσκομμα γένηται τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν.

βλεπω see, look, beware of  
 πως i) interrog. particle how? ii) enclitic  
 particle somehow, in some way  
 ἐξουσία, ας f right, capability, power

ἐξουσία would have been a key word in the  
 vocabulary of the 'strong.'

"Paul reminds them that no Christian is at  
 liberty to assert his 'rights' if that means doing  
 harm to other people, a principle of wide  
 application." Morris

προσκομμα, ατος n that which causes  
 stumbling or offence

"For Paul, the so-called ἐξουσία of the  
 Corinthians is a πρόσκομμα." Gardner  
 "If this passage says anything at all to the  
 ethical debates of today's world, it addresses  
 not the overworn issue of 'conscience' ... but  
 the impropriety of giving absolute status to 'the  
 right to choose,' whatever the cost for others...  
 This now becomes a warning which addresses  
 an especially sinister aspect of life within  
 certain churches today. Some manipulate their  
 supposed 'gifts' (whether intellectual,  
 structural, or 'spiritual') to assume that they  
 have the right to engage in aggressive conduct  
 which may well cause the less secure (in terms  
 of social class, learning, or supposed  
 inferiority in 'spiritual gifts') to face an  
 unnecessary cause of stumbling." Thistleton

γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι  
 ἀσθενεω be sick, be weak

### Verse 10

ἐὰν γὰρ τις ἴδῃ σὲ τὸν ἔχοντα γινῶσιν ἐν  
 εἰδωλείῳ κατακείμενον, οὐχὶ ἡ συνείδησις  
 αὐτοῦ ἀσθενοῦς ὄντος οἰκοδομηθήσεται εἰς τὸ  
 τὰ εἰδωλόθυτα ἐσθίειν;

ἴδῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ὄρω  
 γνωσις, εως see v.7  
 εἰδωλειον, ου n idol's temple  
 κατακειμαι lie (in bed), recline at table  
 οὐχι not, no; used in questions expecting an  
 affirmative answer.  
 συνειδησις, εως see v.7  
 οἰκοδομηθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s  
 οἰκοδομεω build, build up, encourage

An ironic use of οἰκοδομεω.

Not the kind of 'building up' which Paul speaks  
 of in v.1 as the work of love. "Our exegesis has  
 led us to the inescapable conclusion that some  
 of the triumphalist, overconfident 'strong'  
 sought to encourage the less secure to act on  
 their spiritual gift of knowledge as a way of  
 'building' an emancipated, informed faith that  
 paraded its self-awareness of the nothingness  
 of idols and the neutrality of the meat  
 associated with idol worship. The triumphalists  
 wish to edify the insecure into enjoying what  
 was a right (ἐξουσία); Paul drily observes that  
 this approach 'edifies' them into a return to an  
 improper participation in *cultic* aspects of  
 eating meat sacrificed to idols." Thistleton  
 εἰδωλοθυτον, ου see v.7

### Verse 11

ἀπόλλυται γὰρ ὁ ἀσθενῶν ἐν τῇ σῆ γνώσει, ὁ  
 ἀδελφὸς δι' ὃν Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν.

ἀπόλλυται Verb, pres midd indic, 3 s  
 ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill, lose; midd be  
 lost, perish, die

Conzelmann translates γὰρ here as 'then, to be  
 sure'. Edwards views this verse as Paul's  
 response to the claims of the strong reflected in  
 v.10 "Built up, did I say? Nay, he is  
 perishing!"  
 JM Gundry-Volf urges that the verb does not  
 imply eschatological destruction but  
 'existential destruction with both subjective and  
 objective dimensions.'

ἀσθενῶν Verb, pres act ptc, m nom s,  
 ἀσθενεω see v.9  
 σος, σῆ, σου possessive adj. your, yours  
 ἀπέθανεν Verb, aor act indic, 3s ἀποθνησκω  
 die, face death, be mortal

### Verse 12

οὕτως δὲ ἁμαρτάνοντες εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ  
 τύπτοντες αὐτῶν τὴν συνείδησιν ἀσθενοῦσαν  
 εἰς Χριστὸν ἁμαρτάνετε.

ἁμαρτανω sin, commit sin  
 τυπτω beat, strike, wound, injure

Thistleton translates 'inflicting damaging  
 blows on their self-awareness.'

"To sin *against the brethren* means nothing  
 less than to sin *against Christ* (a lesson  
 brought home to Paul long since on the  
 Damascus road, Acts 9:4f)" Morris. Cf. also  
 Gal 4:14.

**Verse 13**

διόπερ εἰ βρωμα σκανδαλίζει τὸν ἀδελφόν μου, οὐ μὴ φάγω κρέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἵνα μὴ τὸν ἀδελφόν μου σκανδαλίσω.

διοπερ emphatic form of διο therefore  
indeed, for this very reason

βρωμα, τος see v.8

σκανδαλιζω cause (someone) to sin, cause  
(someone) to give up the faith

φαγω Verb, aor act indic, 1 s ἐσθιω

κρέα Noun, acc pl κρεας, κρεατος and κρεως  
n meat

αἰων, αἰωνος m age, world order, eternity

σκανδαλισω Verb, aor act subj, 1 s

"The principle laid down in this chapter is one of great practical importance. It is always easy for the strong Christian to see no harm whatever in actions which would be sin if performed by the weak. 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. In cases like the one here dealt with the strong must adapt their behaviour to the consciences of the weak. No good purpose is served by their asserting what they call their 'rights'. Cf. Paul's general treatment of the subject in Rom 14." Morris

"Chrysostom comments, 'It is foolish in the extreme that we should esteem as so entirely beneath our notice those that Christ so greatly cared for that he should have even chosen to die for them, as not even to abstain from meat on their account.' This comment captures very well the key contrast throughout this chapter between asserting one's own 'right to choose' and reflecting with the motivation of love *for the other* what consequences might be entailed for fellow Christians if self-centred 'autonomy' rules patterns of Christian attitudes and conduct. It has little or nothing to do with whether actions 'offend' other Christians in the modern sense of causing psychological irritation, annoyance, or displeasure at a purely subjective level. It has everything to do with whether such attitudes and actions cause *damage*, or whether they genuinely *build* not just 'knowledge' but Christian character and Christian community." Thistleton