

## *"Biblical Body Building"*

1 Cor. 8:1-3

### *Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly*

The passage before us is one of the primary texts on Christian Liberty. Paul's big idea is that "Love builds up the body of Christ." This passage is full of great truth. I am going to slow down and consider each paragraph separately. The larger outline for chapter 8 looks like this.

- I. The foundational truth in approaching areas of disagreement within the local body of Christ (vv. 1-3).
- II. The theological truth in approaching areas of disagreement within the local body of Christ (vv. 4-7a).
- III. The relational truth in approaching areas of disagreement within the local body of Christ (vv. 7b-13).

Chapter 8 is a part of the larger section that runs from chapter 8 through chapter 10. The entire passage is dealing with issues of liberty. Remember Paul's larger call is to body unity.

There are two extremes present in our passage. On one side sits legalism and on the other side sits license. The principle that is to determine abstinence or indulgence is love. In the presence of those with whom I might disagree in an area unspecified in Scripture, what should be my response? Paul says love is to decide what I am to do.

- I. Knowledge makes arrogant (v. 1b)

There were some Corinthians who knew what was true, but failed miserably in the application of that truth in interacting with the local fellowship.

This passage challenges us to think biblically concerning knowledge or information. Knowledge serves love. To have truth without love is dead orthodoxy and to have love without truth is unbridled sentimentalism.

Any knowledge that does not move us to love the body of Christ more deeply is a pseudo-knowledge. God's design never sees knowledge as an end in itself. All the various pieces of God's activities move us to a deeper love for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul's second point is that love edifies.

- II. Love edifies (v. 1c)

Most of us are familiar with the idea of edification. It means to build up. It would appear

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that the entire New Testament direction is toward the building up of the body of Christ. Let us not forget the larger context of the letter. Paul is combating division. A divided body is completely antithetical to the New Testament directive.

Love is the lost jewel of Christian living. In its absence nothing else matters. Excellence without it is nothing but sterile know-how. Jesus said to his disciples “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34, 35).” He did not say by your doctrinal precision or musical selections, but by your love one for another. I trust this will not escape us.

It is so cliché, but “People do not care what we know until they know that we care.” We can fight over doctrine until the end of time and chances are we will, and we can argue over methodology and the interpretation of various passages, but the bottom line in all of this is our love for one another.

### III. Humility strengthens unity (vv. 2,3)

Paul’s appeal is to help us see that in light of the bigger picture the only knowledge really worth knowing is that God knows your name. It is not what you know or even who you know, but rather who knows you (v. 3). Whatever you think you know is relatively small in comparison to what can be known and smaller still when compared to being known by God. God knows me and I thus know God. Because I know God, His love is working in me and through me to those around me. Not to love others is not to know God.