

More than Knowledge

WHAT we know is important but never as important as what we do with our knowledge once we have it! (1 Cor 8:2)

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 (p. 1043)

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that ‘all of us possess knowledge.’ **Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.** **2Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge;** **3**but anyone who loves God is known by him.

4 Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that ‘no idol in the world really exists’, and that ‘there is no God but one.’ **5**Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—**6**yet **for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.**

7 It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. **8**‘Food will not bring us close to God.’ We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. **9But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling-block to the weak.** **10**For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? **11**So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. **12**But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **13**Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

Arrogant, full of themselves, and years ago it was called priggish – we all know someone who fits the bill. Recently a long lost relative wrote about one of my relation in 1957: *“AUNT EVA WAS ON GORDON'S CASE MOST OF THE TIME BECAUSE OF HIS HAUGHTY ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOR. HE WAS STUFFY SUPERIOR ACTING JERK. COULD NOT FIGURE OUT WHAT EVELYN SAW IN HIM. SHE WAS A NICE LOOKING WOMEN. ANY WAY,, WE HIT GREGORY AT SUPER TIME AND I TOOK THEM TO THE MAIN ST. RESTAURANT. EVA GAVE HIM A GOOD TALKING TO BEFORE WE WENT IN. SHE TOLD HIM HE WAS NOT IN NEW YORK, HE WAS OUT WEST IN S.D. AND IF HE STARTED HIS USUAL HAUGHTY TIRADE HERE,, SOME COWBOY WOULD BEAT HIM UP...I LATER HEARD THAT FRED AND GORDON TANGLED. DON'T KNOW IF THEY ACTUALLY GOT IN A FIGHT, OR JUST A VERBAL EXCHANGE.”* Ironically, this is exactly what today's lesson from 1 Corinthians is addressing. We've long seen “knowledge” as an asset – can it also be a liability? A troublesome thing? In a world where knowing it all would be wonderful, why is being a 'know-it-all' such a put down? Today, our faith speaks of “More than Knowledge!”

We live in what has been called “the information age” - there is so much information available readily at our fingertips, we get overwhelmed! Where once a research paper required trips to the

library, today a couple strokes on the computer does nearly it all! The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians that mere knowledge of the facts is not enough. He writes “ **Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge.**” What is this “necessary knowledge?” As important as diplomas, degrees and education may be, if you lack this “Necessary knowledge” you are an over-educated fool. So what do we need?

Paul writes, “**for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.**” Education is more than accumulating enough facts about your subject whether it is math, English, business or agronomy....education is the mixing and combining those facts into some practical value. What we know is the brick...but what we do with that knowledge is the mortar. Both are necessary but today, we have so much brick and so little mortar. God is the glue that holds all that we are and all that we have together...and yet most folks pay God no attention. We live in an educated world where people know many things, but if this is ever to become a WISE world, we need the glue that holds it all together – that glue is God! Without God, we are just waiting to tumble!

For Paul all this centers around meat offered to idols. In his world, if you wanted some Prime Rib – there was no Branding Iron or Drivers Choice...you went to church! Animals were butchered in the temples and after they were bled on the altars, the meat was sold. This created problems for some who thought that such meat was spiritually tainted and unfit for Christian consumption. Paul knows that this is not true but others did not. He says we have a responsibility to those who have more particular sensitivities. “**But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling-block to the weak.**” Knowledge becomes a stumbling-block when we don't consider how it can wound others. Like the wheel-chair at the bottom of the stairs on your bulletin cover, what we know can really hold others back. Now its true that some people just want to control others and choose to stay in the dark, that requires another sermon, but we are responsible to others with how we handle our knowledge. If you know something – anything – how will you use it to make a better world? Will your knowledge only be a ticket for a bigger salary and a better position for you? Knowledge = social and spiritual responsibility. If you're a teacher, can you share that gift in church? If you're a farmer, how can your awareness be shared in our fellowship of faith? If you can read – who can you help that can not read or is just learning? Our lesson commands us to take our gifts and share them...both within and without these walls. Whose life is enriched today by your willingness to share what you know, what you've learned, what you can do, the man or woman you have become. It is essential to this faith of ours that whatever it is that we know is shared for the common good. How do you do that?