

1 Corinthians 8

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love and conscience in the Christian community, particularly regarding actions that may affect others' faith.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 8:1

Topics: "Christian Responsibility", "Knowledge vs. Love"

Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the complexities surrounding the consumption of food offered to idols, emphasizing that while idols are nothing in themselves, they can affect the consciences of believers. He highlights the importance of knowledge tempered with love, warning that exercising one's freedom can lead to the spiritual downfall of a weaker brother. Darby explains the distinction between God and the Lord Jesus Christ, noting that while believers are secure in their salvation, they must remain dependent on God's power and guidance. He stresses the need for believers to act in love and consideration for one another, as leading a brother into sin can have dire consequences. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a balance between knowledge and love in the Christian community.

Transcript

Here we come to things offered to idols. There are two distinct directions about that. They had to own the idol was nothing, and yet own it was something to the consciences of men. Looked at it in itself, as an idol, it was nothing; and the meat offered to it was what God created. But then the consciences of men got into connection with demons about it. He says at first, "We know that an idol is nothing in the world"; and then again, "As touching things offered to idols, we know, for we all have knowledge." But knowledge only puffs up, and the man who knew all this, might go with a clear conscience himself and eat this meat, but would stumble his brother who had a weak conscience.

In verse 6 the word "in" should be "for": "Of whom are all things and we for him." I believe that is the right force of eis. And in the same passage, the different uses of the words "God" and "Lord" are seen very clearly. It is not the divine nature as such, but the place that the divine Persons hold in what men call the economy of grace. The Father rested in simple Godhead, but the Son has become a man and taken the place of Lord in His manhood. Then when I speak specifically of God, I speak of the Father. As to Christ, "he shall call his name Jesus" - Jehovah the Saviour - for He shall save His people from their sins; but the place He has now taken is that of Lord. "God hath made him whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." It is not that He ceases to be Jehovah, but He has taken the place of Lord, while the Father rests

in simple abstract Godhead. I notice it, because in Christ as Lord I get the grace administered. I am a child with the Father, but if I am looking for administration, I go to the Lord: "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." "Lord, we have heard by many of this man," and so on. "To us there is but one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ." It does not say what the nature of that Lord is. He is God and He is man both, but you have the place, the leading place He has taken. "All power," He said, "is given to me in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore, and disciple all nations." Defiling the conscience (v. 7), means that, if a man has a conscience about anything as evil, he must follow his conscience, or he defiles it. Mark here, there is no building up on knowing evil. If I think I ought to eat herbs, I must eat them or my conscience is defiled. I must depart from iniquity; but I cannot build up on the negative.

233 In verse 11, "shall the weak brother perish?" is the tendency of my eating so far as I can go, because I am leading him to sin against his conscience. It is not that the Lord will not step in and save him, but that is what I am doing. We have the same truth in other forms elsewhere, "for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom. 8:13): that is the end of living after the flesh. It is nothing about eternal death or eternal life either. He is dead already, and the end of those things is death. Death is the judgment of God. If a man lives in those things, he shall die. God has shewn the end of certain things to be death, and if I drag my brother into those things, and their end is death, then, though I do not believe from other texts that God will leave him there, yet I am making my brother perish.

It is a great thing never to twist a single text of scripture to a doctrine. God is wiser than we are, and He has made no mistakes. I see people afraid of certain texts about certain doctrines, and I feel, therefore, that doctrine is not a settled thing with them. It is the same in effect in Romans: "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died" - destroy my brother for a bit of meat! The moment I see that the end of these things is death, and I am making my brother do one of them, it is plain at once that I am destroying my brother, and God's act to him would be in spite of me. It is quite true, that the moment I look at a believer in Christ, there is no "if," nor can be, as to his security; he is accepted in the Beloved, and there is no "if anything"; he is sitting in the heavenly places in Christ, and the whole matter is settled; but that is not all that God has chosen to do about him. He has chosen to put him through the wilderness when he has redeemed Him, and then we have "ifs" and "whens" without end: "If ye hold fast," in Hebrews; "If ye continue," in Colossians, and so on. But what we have along with it is, absolute dependence upon Another, and infallible faithfulness in Another. As I have sometimes said, I may be standing with my child on the top of a rocky precipice, and he is apt to run about foolishly, and I say to him, "If you tumble over, you will be smashed to atoms"; but I have not the slightest idea of leaving my hold of him, or of letting him fall. Now we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. This shews we need to be kept; but on our side it is dependence on the power that does keep. You cannot confuse that with acceptance; but it is constant dependence upon God keeps my soul in a right state towards Him.

234 The cautions in God's word make me think of God's perfect love and faithfulness in keeping me; that occupies me in my proper place of dependence. It is the confusion of this with acceptance that makes all the difficulty. I could not say to you now, "If I were to go to Belfast," for I am here; and so is my standing before God absolute. "Who will confirm you to the end" proves that I want confirming. God puts me in a place where the manna will not be wanting one single morning, and so I live by every word of God, and this brings one back to a blessed sense of dependence continually. Redemption brings one into the wilderness, and then what do I find? That God has been thinking of the nap of my coat all the way, nor has my foot swollen along the road, while He leads me there to humble me, and prove me, to know what is in my heart; and again, "that thou mightest know that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of

God." (Also Deut. 8:15, 16.) It is not merely that I am safe in Christ - accepted - but I am kept by the power of God in dependence upon Him; and there it is that I get "ifs" and "ifs," but none upon the faithfulness of God or a doubt about it. It is only as regards myself that I find the constant "if" that keeps me in dependence. On His side, "I know my sheep and am known of mine, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Well, then, the hand must be there to keep me. It makes the perfect faithfulness of God receive us, but then we are dependent upon that faithfulness

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