

1 Corinthians 8:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

Analysis

Now as touching things offered unto idols (περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων, *peri de ton eidolothyton*)—Paul addresses meat sacrificed in pagan temples, a volatile issue in cosmopolitan Corinth. His pastoral response pivots on a crucial contrast: **Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth** (ἡ γνώσις φυσιοῖ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ). The verb *physioi* (φυσιοῖ, "inflates, puffs up") depicts pride as spiritual bloating, while *oikodomei* (οἰκοδομεῖ, "builds up, edifies") uses architectural imagery—love constructs, knowledge merely inflates.

The Corinthians prided themselves on theological sophistication ("we all have knowledge"), but Paul subordinates *gnosis* (knowledge) to *agape* (self-sacrificing love). This becomes the interpretive key for chapters 8-10: intellectual correctness without pastoral sensitivity destroys rather than edifies the church. The "strong" believer who flaunts liberty wounds the "weak" brother—making orthodoxy an instrument of harm rather than help.

Historical Context

In first-century Corinth, virtually all meat sold in the *macellum* (public market) came from animals sacrificed in pagan temples. Temple rituals provided the city's meat supply, creating a conscience crisis: could Christians eat such meat? The "strong" argued idols were nonentities (8:4); the "weak" feared spiritual

contamination. Social meals at temples (8:10) complicated matters further—declining invitations meant social ostracism.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Where do you prioritize being "right" over being loving—using theological knowledge as a weapon rather than a tool for building up?
2. How does Paul's "knowledge puffs up, love builds up" challenge evangelical culture that prizes doctrinal precision over pastoral sensitivity?
3. In what areas might your Christian liberty become a stumbling block to weaker believers?

Interlinear Text

Περὶ	δὲ	τῶν	εἰδωλοθύτων	οἶδαμεν	ὅτι	πάντες	
as touching	Now	G3588	things offered unto idols	we know	that	we all	
G4012	G1161		G1494	G1492	G3754	G3956	
γνώσις	ἔχομεν	ἢ	γνώσις	φυσιοῖ	ἢ	δὲ	ἀγάπη
Knowledge	have	G3588	Knowledge	puffeth up	G3588	Now	charity
G1108	G2192		G1108	G5448		G1161	G26
οἰκοδομεῖ·							
edifieth							
G3618							

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 8:7 (Parallel theme): Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

Romans 14:3 (Parallel theme): Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Revelation 2:14 (Parallel theme): But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Isaiah 5:21 (Parallel theme): Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

1 Corinthians 8:4 (Parallel theme): As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

Romans 15:14 (Parallel theme): And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Acts 15:29 (Parallel theme): That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Ephesians 4:16 (Love): From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

1 Corinthians 8:2 (Parallel theme): And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Numbers 25:2 (Parallel theme): And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

