

1 Corinthians 8:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols (περὶ τῆς βρώσεως τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων, peri tes broseos ton eidolothytion)—Paul now applies his love-knowledge principle to the specific case. The theological facts are correct: **an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one.** The Greek *ouden* (οὐδέν, "nothing") is emphatic—idols have zero ontological reality.

This monotheistic confession echoes the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4, "The LORD our God is one LORD"). Paul affirms the "strong" party's theology: since idols are non-existent, meat sacrificed to them is metaphysically unchanged. The error isn't their doctrine but their failure to apply it pastorally. Correct theology divorced from love destroys; theology governed by love edifies. Chapters 8-10 will nuance this: while idols are "nothing," demons operate through idolatry (10:19-21), so the issue is complex.

Historical Context

Pagan temples dominated Corinth's landscape—temples to Aphrodite, Apollo, Poseidon, and the imperial cult. Sacrificial rituals were civic duties, not merely private religion. For new Gentile converts, especially those from pagan priestly backgrounds, eating eidolothyta (idol-meat) triggered traumatic associations with

their former demon-worship. The "strong" believers, confident in monotheism, lacked empathy for these psychological and spiritual scars.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Where are you theologically correct but pastorally insensitive—wielding truth without love?
2. How do you balance "an idol is nothing" with respect for believers whose consciences differ?
3. What "freedoms" might you need to limit out of love for weaker Christians?

Interlinear Text

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|--|-------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Περὶ | τῆς | βρώσεως | οὖν | τῶν | | | | |
| As concerning | G3588 | the eating | therefore | G3588 | | | | |
| G4012 | | G1035 | G3767 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| εἰδωλοθύτων | | | οἴδαμεν | ὅτι | οὐδεὶς | | | |
| of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols | | | we know | that | is nothing | | | |
| G1494 | | | G1492 | G3754 | G3762 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| εἴδωλον | ἐν | κόσμῳ | καὶ | ὅτι | οὐδεὶς | θεὸς | ἔτερος | εἰ |
| an idol | in | the world | and | that | is nothing | God | other | G1487 |
| G1497 | G1722 | G2889 | G2532 | G3754 | G3762 | G2316 | G2087 | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| μὴ | εἷς | | | | | | | |
| G3361 | one | | | | | | | |
| | G1520 | | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 4:39 (References God): Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Isaiah 41:24 (Parallel theme): Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.

Ephesians 4:6 (References God): One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

1 Timothy 2:5 (References God): For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Deuteronomy 6:4 (References God): Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

Isaiah 44:24 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Mark 12:29 (References God): And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

Isaiah 44:6 (References God): Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.