



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Exercising our “Rights”

Tuesday, 11 March 2014

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CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

152nd General Assembly

- TUESDAY @ 7:30 AM in 123 CAP
- TUESDAY @ 12 NOON in 328 CLOB

Capitol Commission Bible Studies are held Tuesday mornings at 7:30am and again at 12 Noon. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. The study for the 2014 General Assembly is the book of First Corinthians.

I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here *solely* to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.

– Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission Bible Study is

Tuesday, 11 March 2014

First Corinthians 8 – Exercising our “Rights”

Have you experienced an occasion in which someone thought they were gifted in a certain manner, yet the exact opposite was true? Folks will generally be polite for a little while, and then there is that awkward moment in which patience is no longer an option. What was somewhat comical at first, now becomes obnoxious because someone is so confident in their ability that they do not realize how they appear and sound to others. Someone must gently and honestly tell the individual that they are not as gifted as they imagine themselves and need to realize that they are actually making a fool of themselves with their lack of ability.

First Corinthians 8 addresses some believers who acted in a despicable and obnoxious manner. The individuals learned a few things regarding the Christian faith, yet they were so confident in themselves that they acted and presumed as if they knew everything. The individuals were so proud of themselves that they were no longer able to perceive important matters, such as the responsibility to be considerate and edifying to others. The proud behavior of certain individuals could not continue; thus, with concern for them, 1 Corinthians 8 addresses what should be the guiding principle for Christian behavior.

KNOWLEDGE USED WRONGLY

(1 Cor 8:1-3) The book of First Corinthians addresses many issues, although the primary emphasis is upon the believer’s eternal salvation,

which one receives by divine grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The next issue mentioned is the matter of “things sacrificed to idols” (8:1). The subject receives meticulous consideration within the twelve subsequent verses.

Within the Greek culture of 1 Corinthians, families often participated in religious sacrifices. Sacrificial animals would be offered in pagan temples, and only a portion of the meat was burned in those rituals. The remaining meat would be sold at a cheaper price in the marketplace.

Greece was experiencing a famine during the time in which 1 Corinthians was written. Consequently, many of the secondhand cuts of meat would be purchased by some Christians, and may also have been necessary as a result of economic challenges that prohibited one from purchasing more costly products that were sold directly at market. The issue was whether Christians, who had forsaken a life of idolatry for faith in Jesus Christ, could eat meat offered to idols. The question would be whether to eat such meats would be to participate in idolatry, and thus involve worship of idols (cf. Acts 15:29).

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man [and woman] of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Of course, the *specific* issue that the early church was seeking to resolve is not a matter of concern in the present time. Nevertheless, the revelation that is derived from 1 Corinthians 8 does establish guiding principles for Christian behavior, especially with regard to the liberty (“rights”) that believers experience in Christ Jesus.

The discussion begins with a word to those who asserted that believers *could not* eat “things sacrificed to idols.” Scripture acknowledges that there is certain “knowledge” regarding this matter. For instance, an idol is nothing thus to eat meat sacrificed to idols is not necessarily idolatry. However, to force such “knowledge” upon others who are not as certain can become a form of asserted pride and superiority (1 Cor 8:1-2).

... THOSE WHO GOD KNOWS DEMONSTRATE — BY THEIR ACTIONS — THAT THEY ARE TRULY SAVED (REDEEMED).

One can presume to discern everything needed to know regarding a specific issue, yet neglect a crucial factor or two (8:2). The primary factor is not to know; rather, to be known by God (8:3; cf. Gal 4:9); in other words, God approves one’s deeds because such actions agree with the Holy Bible. Unlike prideful people who focus their religious lives upon knowledge, those who God knows demonstrate — by their actions — that they are truly saved (redeemed).

Capitol Commission Bible Studies

Tuesday (11 March) @ 7:30am – 8:00am, 123 CAP

Tuesday (11 March) @ 12 Noon – 12:45pm, 328 CLOB

lunch provided from sponsorship by Faith Community Church, Woodstock



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Exercising our “Rights”

KNOWLEDGE USED RIGHTLY

(1 Cor 8:4-6) The fundamental truth with regard to idolatry is that it is stupidity. The truth is that idols are not gods because “there is no God but one” (8:4). The world may boast its “many gods and many lords,” yet Christians know that the Creator God (who is triune as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is the only Lord who exists (8:5-6).

First John 4:4b – greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

With such knowledge of God’s exclusivity, it is easy to understand why some Christians did not hesitate to eat “things sacrificed to idols.” These believers were not concerned because they regarded such religious ceremonies as insignificant. Scripture affirmed such conclusions and theology to a certain extent. The Corinthian believers inferred that Christianity’s monotheism (belief in one God) precluded the existence of other gods, and therefore, negated the significance of pagan sacrifices.

THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAVE NO REASON TO BE SUPERSTITIOUS (1 JOHN 4:4).

Of course, there is an evil spiritual reality that influences pagan idolatry. Scripture does affirm that idolaters worship demons (Deut 32:16-17; Rev 9:20). Later in the epistle to the Corinthians, we are told that pagan sacrifices are offered “to demons and not to God” and are warned against participating with demonic rituals (1 Cor 10:18-22). One should understand the statement “that there is no such thing as an idol in the world” as a comparative assertion; in other words, no idol can compare to the glory and honor of the true God. Those who trust in the Lord Jesus have no reason to be superstitious (1 John 4:4).

KNOWLEDGE THAT IS LACKING

(1 Cor 8:7-13) Not all believers know that idols are nothing (8:7). Apparently, a significant number of believers in Corinth were still “accustomed to the idol” so that it was difficult for them to disassociate the food from the false “god” to whom it was sacrificed. Consequently, these individuals “defiled” themselves by actually becoming (in some manner) involved in sacrifice to a false god. Some were sinning because “their conscience” was not properly informed: everyone does not “have this knowledge” (v. 7).

Sin occurs whenever you violate your conscience (i.e. do what you believe is wrong), even if the action itself is not sinful. If you believe something to be a sin against God (such as eating meat, in the case of 1 Cor 8), then even if it is not sinful, for you to do what you believe is wrong is sin. The reason is that your attitude toward God is wrong. If you do what you believe is an offense against God (or even might be wrong), it means you are willing to cause offense to God (and such an attitude is sin).

The issue of whether “we do not eat” or “we do eat” is not the essential idea of 1 Corinthians 8. Indeed, “food will not commend us to God” (8:8). The primary issue, in addition to the matter of conscience, is one’s attitude toward another believer “for whose sake Christ died” (8:11).

First Corinthians 8:9 – But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

Certainly, one has the “liberty” to eat, but the usage of those “rights” is always predicated by their effect upon others (8:9; cf. Gal 5:13). The precept stated in verse 9 is greater than the occasion to which it applies, and is very profitable to keep in mind, especially when you or another might demand your “rights.” We have already seen the careless assertion of one’s rights in 1 Corinthians 6 in relation to divisions and quarreling.

Galatians 5:13 – For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Scripture is not teaching that a Christian should not do something that offends another believer in Jesus Christ (which is how these verses are commonly misunderstood). The Bible is stating that if your example causes someone “who is weak” to sin, you should cease doing what you (otherwise) have legitimate liberty to do until such a time that is necessary for a fellow believer to gain adequate knowledge regarding the issue in question (1 Cor 8:9-13). Exercising your “rights” in a manner that leads another believer to sin – by your example – also becomes sin for you who are stronger (8:12); in other words, you sin against the one “who is weak,” in addition to sinning against Christ who died for them.

The emphasis upon “knowledge” (vv. 1-4, 7, 10-11) indicates that some believers assumed to have superior “knowledge,” and thus exercised their “rights” without any regard of the effect upon others. The notion that a Christian can live without thought of another believer is refuted as being inconsiderate and unloving (vv. 10-13). Each believer in Jesus Christ is “his brother’s keeper” (guardian). Protecting those in Christ Jesus takes precedence over exercising one’s freedoms. *We must always seek to deepen our understanding and application of biblical truth so that we experience greater freedom by means of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the honor to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact us by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

The mission of Capitol Commission is to reach Capitol communities for Christ—one person at a time, to disciple them, and to prepare them for a lifetime of ministry, wherever God chooses to place them. Did you know that Capitol Commission is now in 23 state capitols (having recently added a new Tennessee State Minister)? God is accomplishing more than we could have ever imagined, as our various state ministries and national ministry work together. *Please join us in this ministry!*

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TUESDAY, 18 MARCH @7:30AM in 123 CAP
and again @ 12 NOON in 328 CLOB**