



Knowing as We Ought to Know

No. 19
Series: 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

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Text

8 Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. ² If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³ But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

⁴ Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed 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 However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸ Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹ But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹ And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹² Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Introduction

NBC used to air these public service announcements on television called “The More You Know.” Some celebrity would look into the camera and tell people to stay in school so they can succeed in life or explain how cocaine use affects your unborn baby or warn people against violence or something like that. And then the phrase – “The More You Know” – would flash across the screen. The idea was that the more you know, the further you’ll go. I guess they’re still making them today, trying to educate people.

Lately we’ve been in 1 Corinthians 6 and 7. Today we are going to cover all of chapter 8. And in this chapter Paul is talking about the more you know. He’s saying that for the Christian the more you know, the further you’ll go... in loving people. The more you know, the more you’ll let go of your rights. The more you know of God, the more you’ll get to know other people and seek to serve them. The more you know, theologically, the more you’ll grow relationally.

Now, you may be thinking, “Wait a minute... I’ve seen a lot of theological egg heads that seemed to know a lot, but were not very nice.” It’s sadly true: often times people may appear to have a lot of knowledge crammed into their heads, but their hearts are cold. Maybe they can debate the finer points of ecclesiology, but they aren’t committed to actual people in a local church who aren’t like them. Book knowledge

doesn't always automatically translate into biblical living. And the same can be said for those who are more charismatic and think they get their spiritual knowledge not through study but through subjective experiences. There are a lot of people who display some kind of "knowledge," but they're kind of jerks.

But the issue isn't with knowledge per se. It's with partial knowledge. You may know part of a truth, but not the whole. Or the problem is with not thinking through fully the implications of what you know. Today in 1 Corinthians ch. 8 Paul talks about people who claim to have "knowledge" but they are missing something. They are not yet knowing as they ought. The answer that Paul gives is not less knowledge, but more. This passage is packed with deep theological truths. And it's also highly practical. In short, what we're going to see is just this: **the more you learn of God the less you live for yourself and the more you love your brothers and sisters**. If you're self-absorbed and irritated by others that you think don't get it like you do and cramp your style, you need to know more about God.

This chapter can be divided into three sections: vv. 1-3, vv. 4-6, and vv. 7-13. And each of these sections contains at least one profound theological truth about God that Paul wants the Corinthians to ponder further, with the effect that it will engender greater love and unity in the church. Verses 1-3 among other things teach the truth of God's foreknowledge. Verses 4-6 among other things teach the truth of God's preeminence. And vv. 7-13 among other things teach the truth of Christ's humiliation.

Foreknowledge, preeminence, humiliation... We need to learn more about these truths. And **the more we learn of God the less we will live for ourselves and the more we will love each other**.

Let's pray...

Foreknowledge (vv. 1-3)

Our first section is vv. 1-3. Paul begins, "Now concerning..." And this is a phrase that he's used already in 7:1 and 7:25 and will use again in 12:1, 16:1, and 16:12. It marks a change of topic to address something else that the Corinthians had an issue with. In this letter Paul is addressing problems in the church that he had heard about from reports or that they had written to him about in a letter.

The new topic here is "food offered to idols." Most likely what's in mind is meat. In Corinth in those days there were a plethora of shrines and temples representing different deities. And the way these gods were honored was through someone bringing one of their animals and sacrificing it. It showed one's devotion. I give up something to get something – the god's favor and blessing. Part of the slaughtered animal would be burned at the altar. The priest, aiding in the religious rites, would get a portion as his service fee. And the participant in the ritual would also get to eat some of it. But often there would be leftovers. And there wasn't refrigeration. So adjacent to the temple would be a store where you could get discount cuts of meat. It was part supermarket, part souvenir gift shop. The question was: could Christians go there to buy their groceries.

These kinds of questions are still very real for believers in other parts of the world where food sacrifices are still being made to other pagan deities. And many people from those cultures live in big American cities like ours now, so it's not a totally foreign concept. Furthermore, Westerners participate in all kinds of idolatry these days too. And

I don't just mean idols of the heart – idolizing money or sex or power, but actual physical idols. I see them more and more in store windows as I walk in my neighborhood. I was picking up my daughter downtown this week and passed a tarot reading place with a big statue of a deity in the window. I foresee these kinds of scenarios becoming more and more prominent in places like Chicago. And there are plenty of applications of it that we will make as we go on.

But in Corinth there was a question about eating food that had been previously connected with idol worship. And there were some members of the church in Corinth who had no problem with this at all. In fact, they felt very confident in their eating this food because they claimed that they had “knowledge.” Piecing the situation together from the verses that follow, it seems that there were some Christians who felt so enlightened that they took pride in going to the temples to get meat. They knew it was no big deal and thought everybody else should just know this too. It seems that Paul is quoting from them here in v. 1. You see it in quotation marks – “all of us possess knowledge.”¹

But there were some in the church who were so distraught and conflicted about this. They felt like it was unfaithfulness to Christ to have anything to do with that false religion that they had been saved out of. And they felt like their brothers and sisters who ate were flaunting the fact and dismissing their concerns as silly and trying to pressure them into doing something they didn't feel right about.

And Paul writes to say that this kind of “‘knowledge’ puffs up.” This is a favorite word of Paul's. We saw it back in ch. 4, v. 6. And it's translated other places in this letter as “arrogant.” He says something is wrong. Some of these Corinthians are turning knowledge into an excuse for pride and for feeling superior and in turn for being smug and inconsiderate of others. Paul says – “This quote-unquote *knowledge* you have is puffing you up. '[B]ut love builds up.' Your knowledge is not being used in love to edify others. It's being used selfishly to just serve your own appetites and desires. That's not right.”

I can't wait to get to ch. 13 – the “love chapter” – where we see Paul wax eloquently about love as the highest virtue. There he says, “If I have... all knowledge..., but have not love, I am nothing.” In light of that, the point here, to quote one commentator, is probably that a certain segment of the Corinthian church is “infatuated with abstract theological or philosophical knowledge but remain[s] woefully deficient in their knowledge (and love) of God. True theological understanding, and certainly true knowledge of God, does not lead one to act in a way which is insensitive to others and offensive to God. As [the 4th century Christian] Ambrosiaster put it, ‘Only when a person has love can he be said to know as he ought to know.’”²

So these people that Paul is addressing... their knowledge is deficient and deformed. Paul says in v. 2 – “If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.” In other words, if your knowledge is making you feel self-important, you're not pursuing knowledge in the right way. To quote the 17th century Christian George Swinnock, “Right knowledge begins in the head, but it does not end there. It affects the heart and regulates the life.”³ Distinguishing mere knowledge from wisdom, which is knowledge applied in a godly way, one person has put it like this – “Knowledge is proud that it has learnt so much. Wisdom is humble that it knows no more.”⁴ The more you know should make you more humble as you realize all that you

don't know. And the little you do know should be received gratefully and used unpretentiously, in love, to build others up, not puff yourself up.

So what's the answer to this kind of warped use of knowledge? How does Paul address it? He doesn't say, "Stop learning! Just love!" The answer is further knowledge. Specifically, Paul puts forward the doctrine of God's foreknowledge in v. 3 for the Corinthians to chew on for a bit. It's like he says, "Don't focus on your knowledge of God; ponder his prior and sustaining knowledge of you."

Look at v. 3. Paul says, "But if anyone loves God, he is known by God." That's an intriguing thing to say, isn't it? That means that if you have any genuine understanding of God that makes you desire and delight in him, it is contingent upon his knowing and loving of you. Have you ever thought about that? If you know God, it is because he pre-knew you. This is what I mean by foreknowledge. Not just God's exhaustive knowledge of all future events. That is true and glorious. But more specifically by foreknowledge I'm referring to his intimate knowledge of you before you were born, before the world began, that signifies his eternal and enduring decision to elect you as his own. This truth is mindboggling, humbling, and tenderizing.

We see this doctrine elsewhere in Paul in Romans 8:29-30 – "[T]hose whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." The golden chain of salvation. It's not just Paul. We also see this doctrine taught by Peter in 1 Peter 1:1-2 – "To those who are elect... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." We see it in the OT. God says to Jeremiah – "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer. 1:5). It's a beautiful thought, isn't it?

And it's a humbling thought. I didn't choose God. He chose me. I didn't figure God out. He revealed himself to me. I didn't go get to know God. He knew me and came and introduced himself. I know God, but it's because he knows me. Paul talks in similar ways in Galatians 4:9 where he says, "[N]ow that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God." God's knowledge of us precedes and grounds our knowledge of him. It's better not to think – "I know God!" But rather – "He knows me!" Our knowledge should not make us proud, but make us grateful that God determined to know us.

Paul will later say in this letter that "[n]ow I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known" (13:12). We have some knowledge, but it's partial in this life. But God's knowledge of us is complete and total. He knows the number of hairs on our head, our thoughts before we think them. We should focus on that, instead of focusing on what we think we know and feeling prideful about it. Swinnock – "Other knowledge puffs up... but the [true] knowledge of God shrinks and shrivels us to nothing."⁵

Do you see that truth there in the second half of v. 3? "Known by God." His gracious knowledge of us should overwhelm our pride in our perceived knowledge of him.

Preeminence (vv. 4-6)

In the next section, vv. 4-6, Paul gets back to the issue of eating food associated with idol worship. "Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an

idol has no real existence,’ and that ‘there is no God but one.’” Again, these are in quotation marks because he’s probably quoting what the Corinthians have been saying. It seems that here Paul is saying that they are on to something true. But they haven’t fully fleshed out the implications of what they are saying. They are just using the fundamental truth from the OT *Shema* that there is one God to excuse their eating of meat offered to other gods. But there is still something evil about the idols. And the truth of God’s supremacy and preeminence needs to be even more forcefully impressed upon them.

Verse 5 is admittedly a little confusing, but read in light of what Paul says later in ch. 10, v. 20 where he clarifies that “what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons,” (which is also taught in the OT in Dt. 32:17), I think he’s saying, “In one sense, yes, these false gods aren’t real, they’re fake, they don’t exist (cf. Gal. 4:8). But yet in another sense you need to know that there is an evil reality that stands behind them – the demonic realm.” He says, “For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth,” “so-called” because in a sense they aren’t real gods, there aren’t other deities out there with whom our God co-exists. But then Paul says “– as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’ –” *I think* “the demons of [10:20] are the ‘gods’ and ‘lords’ of 8:5.”⁶ In other words, “Yes, you’re partially right. But it’s more nuanced than you’re presenting it to be.”

It’s kind of like how we talk to our children when they’re scared as we’re tucking them in at night. If you’re a parent, have you ever had a kid who couldn’t sleep because he or she was convinced there was a monster under the bed or a zombie looking in the windows? What do you say? You say, “You can go to sleep. There are no such things as monsters. Zombies aren’t real.” You can say, “There are no such things as ghosts.” And then you sing the doxology with them that praises Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and their eyes pop open wide – “So there are ghosts?” Well, yes. And, no. We shouldn’t live with a delusional notion of ghosts everywhere. But we also shouldn’t live with the delusion that there is no such thing as spiritual beings, some of which are evil, working to attack us and detract us from God.

I don’t have time to go into a full treatment of demonology, but the reality of monotheism does not preclude the reality of evil spirits that stand behind the false religions and idolatry in the world. And so we shouldn’t take idol worship flippantly. There is something evil there that we should be careful of. Allah is not real. Krishna does not exist. They’re just made up. That statue is just a stone. And yet behind those non-existent deities there exists a demonic realm that we should take very seriously.

“[Y]et for us there is one God.” What Paul writes next is a “beautifully crisp and profound text.”⁷ It sounds like a creedal statement. Maybe Paul is quoting it from somewhere. But I think it’s probably his own writing. It is dense with doctrine. Stare at it with me for a bit. “There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist.” One God who stands as the reason for our existence and the goal of our existence. From whom and for whom.

But he is Father, which implies the Son. And right next to this definitive declaration of monotheism – only one God – there is this next phrase – “and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” What a stunning attestation of the divinity of Jesus. There is one God, and Jesus the Lord is one with him! “By him all things were created” (Col. 1:16). “In him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). “Through [the Son, the Father] created the world. He is the radiance of the glory

of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:2-3). The Christological and Trinitarian implications here are infinitely deep. We worship one God, in three persons, as we confessed in the words of the Nicene Creed earlier. And “from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 12:36).

Doctrine does matter. Knowledge is important... in the service of devotion. We need to ponder these truths. We need to think *more* deeply about who God is, how he is the ultimate reason and means and purpose for everything else that is. He is the Creator and he is the Sustainer and he is the End of all things. It’s not that the Corinthians didn’t need knowledge. They needed *more* knowledge. They needed to think *more* deeply than just a simplistic thought that there’s only one God, so idols don’t exist, so I can do what I want with food from their temples. They needed to be ravished and totally reoriented by the majesty of God!

I read this statement recently by the 7th century Christian John of Damascus exulting in the divine attributes:

We both know and confess that God is without beginning, without end, eternal and everlasting, uncreated, immutable, unchangeable, simple, non-composite, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribed, limitless, ungraspable, incognizable, unfathomable, good, just, almighty, the creator of all created things, sovereign over all, overseeing all, exercising foresight over all, having supreme power over all, and judge of all.⁸

Behold the God who was, and is, and is to come. The one and only. The self-existent. The all-powerful, everywhere present, all-knowing, incomprehensible, yet knowable God! From, for, and through whom are all things and from, for, and through whom all things continue to exist. “The hand that made everything maintains everything. The power that produced all things out of nothing must preserve all things from returning to nothing. The being that gave us our beings must uphold us in our beings.... It would be impossible for the creation (or any part of it) to exist even for a moment if God were to deny His concurrence to it.”⁹ Are you content with your current knowledge of him? Or do you want to pursue him more? And when you do, a life of comfort, a life of ease, a small little self-assured life of living for your self, becomes less and less tenable. I want to live to know him, the infinite, all-wise, supreme being and very reason for my existence!

Such knowledge does not puff me up, but puts me in my place and puts me on a path of pursuing him and wanting others to know him.

Humiliation (vv. 7-13)

So we need to think more about God’s foreknowledge of us, instead of what we know. We need to learn more about God’s preeminence above all powers and authorities instead of our preoccupation with what we can do. And finally in vv. 7-13 we are presented with the most amazing truth – the truth of Christ’s humiliation. We need to think more about what Christ gave up to identify with us instead of what we get to do that we want to do.

Paul has affirmed, in some sense, the Corinthians who stated that “an idol has no real existence,” but he’s sought to blow their minds with the complexity of the reality of God. He’s even bigger than they know. “However,” he says in v. 7, “not all possess this knowledge.” There are some in the church whose grasp on God’s unrivaled grandeur, for various reasons, is even less at this point.

“[S]ome, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.” If you want to dig deeper into this concept of the conscience and how it should be dealt with, you can read Andy Naselli and J.D. Crowley’s book *Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ*. But basically, the Bible teaches that the conscience should not be violated, even though it may need to be recalibrated. For some in the church in Corinth, their consciences were plagued by the thought of eating food that might have been offered to an idol. Did they need to be so uptight? Probably not.

But the focus in this chapter is not on them. It’s on the ones who claimed to have higher knowledge. Paul says to them that they don’t have to eat the food from idol temples. Verse 8 – “Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.” Knowing that God is everything and these idols are nothing does not mean you *have* to eat food connected with them.

What’s driving their determination to eat? We’ve already seen that there’s pride involved that needed to be humbled by meditating on God’s knowledge of them instead of their knowledge. We’ve seen that it’s a small view of God that allows them to have a small view of their lives, which is that life is about small things like getting good food at a good deal. It may have also been driving by other motivations, like fitting in with the upper levels of society. The social elites in Corinth would have had dinner parties in banquet halls attached to the temple complexes. Maybe these “knowers” were trying to be accepted in the culture and the “weak” were lower class and ostracized. We can surmise many scenarios and possible motivations.

But what’s clear from the text is that one faction of the church was unwilling to bend for another. They didn’t want to give up something they felt they had a right to in order to serve those who were offended and tempted to go against their conscience by their actions. *That’s their problem, not mine*. No, that’s not how it works in the body of Christ.

Verse 9 – “But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.” Your behavior shouldn’t trip up others in the church. Verse 10 – “For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?” It will become clear in chapter 10 that actually participating in the sacrificial ceremony in a temple is totally off limits for believers. So I think what Paul has in mind here is something like a fellow church member seeing you coming out of the temple complex with food you bought there and that making them think maybe it would be okay for me to go in there too, but for them to do that, it would be a step back into idolatry. “And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed,” not built up.

Skip down to v. 13, the conclusion – “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.” The conclusion is that I should be willing to forgo anything for the good of my brother or sister in Christ. I

shouldn't be asserting my own rights, but be willing to give them up for the sake of others.

One person has put it this way, "While it would not be true to say that the robust Christianity of the New Testament envisages the strong as permanently shackled by the weak, yet the strong must always act towards the weak with consideration and Christian love."¹⁰ You don't have to live crippled by an over-sensitive conscience or to people-please those who are. But when it becomes clear that something you're doing is hurting someone else, you should be willing to drop it. Another person has elaborated on this principle this way – "Although the strong must never give up Christian liberty in the face of Judaizers or Pharisees, the strong always should be willing to give up Christian liberty for the sake of the weaker brother who is struggling with leaving pagan practices behind."¹¹ Martin Luther's elegantly expressed it this way – "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."¹²

Can you eat meat that happened to have come from a pagan temple? Yes, of course. But if it causes someone to stumble, it's better not to. It's wise to "abstain from the things polluted by idols" (Acts 15:20). "[F]or most [of us right now]..., idol meat and its analogues in other world religions will not rank among [our] top one hundred moral dilemmas in life! Still, when one realizes the overarching principles involved, applications clamor for attention at every turn."¹³ Can you do yoga? Can you wear yoga pants? How should we think of the Masons? How should we approach alcohol? Is *Harry Potter* okay? *K-Pop Demon Hunters*? Secular music and movies. Social media usage. Celebrating Halloween this week... My goal is not to comment on any of those particular possible controversial issues. It's to show the overarching principle put forward here – believers should be willing to do anything to help fellow believers, not flaunt their freedom. When we insist on our own freedoms, we do not yet know as we ought to know.

Don't just latch on to slogans. For example, "All truth is God's truth," is true. But it can't be misused as an excuse for worldliness or selfishness. Don't just latch on to slogans, but go deeper into love. **The more you learn of God the less you live for yourself and the more you love your brothers and sisters.**

What is the big theological truth found in this third section of today's text? What knowledge do we need more of in order to avoid trampling on our weak brothers and sisters in the body? We need to ponder Christ's humiliation. Where do we see that? Pay attention to the end of v. 11 – "...the brother for whom Christ died." It's a phrase that can become so common place in our Christian world that we fail to pause and really think about what it means. "Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (v. 6) came and died for us! "[T]hough he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Ph. 2:6-8).

Someone has put it this way – "Christians are able to enjoy freedom because someone sacrificed his freedom on their behalf. Their rights are the result of Christ laying aside his claim to any and all of his rights. Our liberties are ours because the ultimate stronger brother gave up his liberty to secure the liberties for his weaker

brothers, namely us!”¹⁴ If we’ve truly grasped that and experienced that sacrificial love for us, then we won’t insist on our own rights and disregard our struggling brothers and sisters for whom Christ also died, but be willing to sacrifice for them.

I think we see this condescension and humiliation in v. 12 too. The boundless God has bound himself to us in Christ. He has deigned to identify himself with us in such a tender and touching way. Look at what Paul says in v. 12 – “Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.” Do you get what he’s saying? It’s a truth that Paul first learned at his conversion on the road to Damascus when the Lord Jesus said to him, “Why are you persecuting me?” Paul wasn’t persecuting Jesus. By this point Jesus had already been killed and rose again and ascended into heaven. Paul up to this point had never met Jesus personally. But what was Paul doing? He was persecuting the church. And Jesus said that was persecuting him. Why? Because the Lord of heaven and earth has so identified himself with his people that to hurt them is to hurt him.

Listen to this paragraph I read in a book recently:

Amazingly, this boundless God draws near to us in the incarnation. The Son of God clothed Himself with our humanity. He whom the heavens cannot contain was contained in the womb of a woman. He came so close that He experienced life in a fallen world. The Bread of Life was hungry, and the Water of Life was thirsty. He came so close that He bore our sin and shame and tasted death for us (Heb. 2:9). We placed ourselves where this boundless God deserves to be – on the throne. This boundless God placed Himself where we deserve to be – on the cross. His forgiveness supersedes our sinfulness, His merit eclipses our guilt, and His righteousness hides our vileness. His abundant mercy blots out our multitude of transgressions (Ps. 51:1).¹⁵

This is knowledge to have, truths to learn that should tenderize us towards others, not make us calloused and set on pursuing our own desires. **The more you learn of God the less you live for yourself and the more you love your brothers and sisters.** Learn of his foreknowledge, his preeminence, and his humiliation in Christ to identify with us, to unite us to himself, at the Cross, and for all eternity in the Church, his body. It will totally transform your life.

Conclusion

The more I read the Bible, the more convinced I am that what God is seeking to do in this world is create churches that take membership seriously.

Individuals in our world today say they want community, but apart from the power of Christ operative in their lives there is no way it can be sustained. They can only hope for faint, fleeting glimmers.

But for those who have experienced the supernatural, unique love of Christ, they are brought into a community of others where they can learn to practice this same sacrificial love for each other.

It’s not easy. Until heaven we still deal with our old habits. And the world around us continues to try to entice us with all kinds of temptations that impede our

experience of community. But “[l]et us know; let us press on to know the LORD” (Hos. 6:3) together! Church is the place to do that.

And in Our Church Covenant we’ve all agreed to this: “Being a part of a body means that members are intimately interrelated. Therefore, I covenant to consider how my words and deeds affect my fellow members and act accordingly.” That’s what this passage is getting at. **The more you learn of God the less you live for yourself and the more you love your brothers and sisters.** I simply close by asking this question: How has the truths of the preeminent God’s foreknowing and sacrificial love of you that has put you into his very body with other believers... how does that affect your day-to-day decision making about what to do with your life?

The Lord’s Table

Ponder that... and ponder anew Christ’s laying down his prerogatives and ultimately his very life for you in taking on flesh and blood to take on our sin at the Cross as we enter into a time of eating at the Lord’s Table.

If you are a member of this church (or happen to be visiting as a member of another gospel-believing church), you are encouraged to eat this food as part of your worship of the one, true God. It’s not a sacrifice that you have brought, but one that he has provided. If you’re not yet a member of a church, do not eat this meal. Use this time to pray and meditate and commit to officially joining a church as soon as possible.

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Nathan Carter on Sunday morning, October 26, 2025. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.

End Notes:

¹ It's hard to know exactly when, but it seems that at times Paul is quoting directly from the Corinthians, using a phrase that they had used. We see quotation marks again here in this passage. Those are not in the Greek text, so we're not for certain what phrases or the extent of the phrases which are from them and which are from Paul. "Fortunately [in this passage], whether Paul cites the Corinthians or not does not affect the interpretation of the text dramatically." Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2018), 168.

² Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 377, citing the quote from Ambrosiaster from Gerald Bray.

³ George Swinnock, *The Blessed and Boundless God* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014 [1672]), 140.

⁴ Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975 [1958]), 125, citing William Kay.

⁵ Swinnock, 144.

⁶ Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 373.

⁷ Ciampa and Rosner, 381.

⁸ John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith* (Yonkers, NY: Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2022), 61.

⁹ Swinnock, 73-4.

¹⁰ Morris, 130.

¹¹ Kim Riddlebarger, *First Corinthians*, The Lectio Continua Expository Commentary on the New Testament (Powder Springs: Tolle Lege Press, 2013), 209-10.

¹² Martin Luther, *A Treatise on Christian Liberty* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957 [1520]), 7.

¹³ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 167.

¹⁴ Stephen T. Um, *1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 156.

¹⁵ J. Stephen Yuille in the preface to Swinnock, *The Blessed and Boundless God*, xiii.