

Principles Of Christian Liberty – Part 1

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Pastor John Miller

I want to read one verse to get us started, verse 1. Paul says, “Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity”—or love—“edifieth.” Beginning with 1 Corinthians 7, Paul has been answering questions that were asked him of the believers in Corinth. You remember we came to chapter 7 and he says, “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me,” so he comes to chapter 7 and is actually responding to specific questions that were being asked of him by the believers there in Corinth.

The first question dealt with marriage and singleness, chapter 7. If you missed that, go to the website and check out the archived teaching there on chapter 7 on marriage and singleness. Now, we come to chapters 8-10, and I want you to note this and we'll tie it together and outline it as we go. Chapters 8-10, and technically the first verse of chapter 11, belong as one unit dealing with the subject of Christian liberty and the right use of our liberty. Paul's answering questions that were asked him about meat offered to idols. Now, I'm sure you're excited and can't wait to hear about that, right? You're probably saying, “Did I hear you right, meat offered to idols?”

When I go to In-N-Out and get a double-double animal style, I don't ask them, “Has this meat been offered to idols?” It's something that we don't really deal with today in America, per se, but they certainly dealt with it then in the days that Paul was writing to the believers there in this Greek culture of Corinth.

Now I want you to catch this, there are principles that we're going to learn in the exercising of what is known as “Christian liberty,” and that's the issue of whether something's right or wrong or right to do or wrong to do because it's not spelled out in black and white in the Bible. They're what're called “gray areas” or areas not addressed by the Bible, and they are areas that Christians have different convictions on, different liberties on. Some say it's wrong to do this, others say it's right, okay, and they disagree over these areas because they're not black and white in the Scriptures. I'm going to get more detail about that in just a moment, so we have to exercise our discernment and liberty, and what we do affects other people when it comes to these questionable things that we have to deal with.

What is the background for the question that was asked Paul? They asked Paul, “Is it okay to eat meat that's offered to idols?” And, here's the reason why. They had a lot of pagan gods, a lot of false Greek gods at the Temple of Aphrodite, Zeus and Nike, and different gods that they offered sacrifice to, and after they would offer an animal in sacrifice to their god, a portion of it they would burn on an altar, but what was left or remaining of that animal they would simply sell in a market. You could go into the market, like we would go into a market, and you could buy a leg of lamb or some part of an animal that you wanted to eat, and you could take it home and eat it. They would go into the marketplace and buy some meat, but the question was, “Was that meat used in a sacrifice to a false god or to a pagan god?” and their conscience bothered them

thinking that perhaps they could become demon possessed or influenced by demons or that something evil or bad could happen to them.

There's a lot of Christians today, it really shocks and surprises me, that have a lot of superstitions about some wrong statue in their house or some magazine in their house or some issue in their house that could make the house become demon possessed, and the demons could jump on us or maybe the demons got in the refrigerator and if I take something out of the refrigerator and eat it, that I'm going to be demon possessed; and they want me to come and sprinkle holy water on their house and exercise the demon out of their bedroom or whatever it might be. They have all these kind of crazy ideas, and we need to be sensitive to those that are struggling with those questions, but we also need to grow in our knowledge and we need to grow in our love—our knowledge of God in His Word and our love for one another. That's the basic problem, and we'll touch on it for the next several weeks, is they would buy meat that had been offered to an idol and some Christians felt like it shouldn't be, we should say no to that and abstain from that.

Other Christians, as we're going to see in our passage, knew the idol was nothing and it's good meat and it's cheaper than other kinds of meat, and Christians are always looking for good deals, you know, that was kind of like the Walmart meat at the time, so, "Let's buy the meat at the pagan market. Who cares if it's been offered to an idol. We know that an idol is nothing, so it's not really an issue."

You might say, "But, John, what does all this have to do with me today?" As I said, the question of Christian liberty is what is in view in this text. One of the big debates among Christians has centered around questionable practices that many believe and feel to be wrong but are not specifically forbidden in the Scripture. Now, I am going to get into the text, and I want to be very, very careful. I'm going to pull back a bit that I have in years past in mentioning issues because I want to focus on principles. The minute I start to talk about issues, some of you are going to take sides against me or side with me or it's going to create controversy and we don't want to go there. But some of the issues we struggle with as Christians today is, is it okay for a Christian to drink alcohol? How's that for an opener? Some Christians say, "Yes," some Christians say, "No, clearly the Bible says you should not be drunk on wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Holy Spirit."

I have my convictions. I have my commitment to abstain. I don't touch it at all. I wouldn't want to because I think it tastes terrible and it's detrimental to you. I don't know why you would ever drink alcohol, it makes no sense to me at all. But some Christians want to have a glass of wine at night. They want to have a glass of wine with their lasagna or spaghetti or whatever they like it with. I don't know.

Another quick question could be smoking—is it okay for a Christian to smoke cigarettes sometimes. I grew up in kind of a Pentecostal holiness, legalistic background, and it didn't compute—a Christian with a cigarette did not compute. Again, I think it's a bad habit. It's not healthy. Why would you want to do that, and it could cause somebody to stumble, but some

Christians do have that habit and can't quite get over it, but I think the Lord could help you to be delivered from it. It's interesting that in different times, different places, culture changes.

You've all heard of Charles Haddon Spurgeon -right?- the great Baptist preacher? He's known as the prince of preachers. Well, he actually smoked cigars. One day he was walking down the streets of London and saw a tobacco shop with a sign in the window that said, "This is the kind of tobacco Spurgeon smokes." When he saw that sign, he got convicted and realized that he didn't want to be promoting tobacco for anyone, he'd be promoting Christ. It is interesting, different cultures, different kind of ideas about what is right or what is wrong.

I've been asked many times, "Can Christians dance?" And I say, "Some can, some can't." The ones I've seen dance, shouldn't dance. They should be embarrassed that they're trying to dance.

I grew up thinking that cards intrinsically of themselves are evil. When I see a deck of cards, I think, Get behind me, Satan. It's just that kind of lodged in my mind. I grew up thinking that cards...I've tied them into gambling, I guess, or from poker playing or whatever it was that I consider to be kind of a bad thing. We have all the different issues about dancing, social events, women wearing makeup, dress, clothes, sports on Sunday, music. Can we listen to secular music? Does it have to be sacred music? Is it okay to listen to a song that's secular? The theater and amusement parks and on and on and on and on the list goes.

We're going to be looking at the principles of how we decide whether or not we should do these questionable things because if these issues are not dealt with in black and white in the Bible, it has caused great problems. We've seen churches split over these controversial issues. Is it okay for Christians to line dance, or whatever. They get all uptight about different issues about what you can and you can't do.

Like many of the Christians today, the Corinthians wanted a "yes" or "no" answer from Paul. We like to have it black and white. We want it all laid down, and that can be dangerous. We need to, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

There are two common extremes when it comes to doubtful things that need to be avoided. The first is legalism. I want you to write these down. Legalism is a term that's describing those who have all their Christian life is rules and lists of rules, and they try to keep all the rules and think of themselves as being more righteous than others who don't keep the lists and the standards that they keep. They live by the law; they're controlled by the law. They're not controlled by the Spirit, so they're just basically known for what they don't do—not what they do, but what they don't do. They form kind of a legalistic relationship to God.

The other extreme that's dangerous is called "license." This is the other extreme. One is "legalism," it's all laws and rules and regulations, many of them are not in Scripture at all, and we need to ask ourselves, "Does the Bible address that issue? Is it spoken of in Scripture?" The other extreme is "license." It's sometimes known as antinomianism, which means they are

against the law. It's kind of sometimes a hyper grace where everything is okay, "We're under the grace of God." They do drink and smoke, and they do these things that sometimes Christians think you shouldn't do because they're under grace and have this license—everything is acceptable as long as it's not forbidden in Scripture. With some things that's true, " . . . but all things are not expedient,"—not all things glorify God. I'm going to give you tonight, when I wrap up, all of the principles taken from this section that we cover over the next several weeks in one setting tonight.

The balance between the two, legalism and license, is what's known as "liberty;" that is, liberty that is controlled by love. So, legalism, license, the two extremes, and the balance in the middle is walking " . . . in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Robert G. Gromacki said, "The 'meat' question, however, belongs to the area of Christian liberty. The rightness or wrongness in eating such meat is not found in the meat itself or in the eating of it. Both of these are morally neutral. The question of sin is introduced by the motivation behind the eating and by the consequences produced by the eating. Thus it was that Paul had to present the principles of grace that stood in marked contrast both to a firm legalism, 'Do' or 'Don't,' and to a selfish individualism, 'Nobody can tell me what to do.'"

In answering Paul's specific questions that they were asking him, Paul actually points out that they were wrong in their attitudes and they needed to have an attitude check. In giving these principles in chapter 8, Paul responds to three reasons that some of the Corinthians gave for acting in the way they did in regard to practices that specifically were forbidden in the Scriptures. They're going to appear on the screen, but they're taken from the text, so you'll see the outline as we dig into this passage.

The first situation was that they were using as an excuse for the wrong use of their liberty was that, "We have knowledge. We know. We're in the know. We're smart. We have knowledge." That's verses 1-3, " . . . we know that we all have knowledge." Go back with me to verses 1-3. Paul says, "Now as touching things"—the 'things' there is a reference to meat, sometimes the reference can be to food in general, but it's talking specifically about meat that was used in sacrifice to idols—"offered unto idols, we know,"—that's a key word there, if you want to note it in your Bible, the word "know." There are some things that we are aware of and—"we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity"—love—"edifieth"—or seeks to build up. Verse 2, "And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. 3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him."

Now, things offered unto idols is one word in the Greek and can be translated idol sacrifices. The first reason that was given was summarized by Paul in the phrase, verse 1. Look at it with me, " . . . we know that we all have knowledge,"—so there's a bit of knowledge in every one of us. We all know certain things. We all have this information. But knowledge is not enough. You can't just go on your knowledge, you have to actually have love for not only God but for others in the Lord, the brothers and sisters that we have in Christ. The first reason that was given was summarized that we all have that kind of knowledge. The problem is that knowledge

alone is not sufficient.

I'm all one for knowledge, and I think that a lot of Christians need more knowledge—they need to be taught and instructed in the Word—but if you just have a bunch of knowledge, it can make you proud, and as Paul says here, “. . . puffeth up.” That “puffeth up” would be used today of a balloon that you blow air into and it just grows bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger, and what happens eventually it just BOOM! It pops, right? Or, if you let it go, it takes off and hits the ground. A lot of Christians are like this balloon, they're just getting puffed up with more knowledge and more knowledge and more knowledge and getting more proud and getting more proud like the Pharisees that think they knew everything. The problem is knowledge alone is not enough. Knowledge alone can lead to feelings of superiority and pride, verse 1.

We know knowledge must be combined with love, look at verse 1. “. . . that we all have knowledge”—but just having knowledge can puff you up, but love builds up. This is a different “up.” It's not a blow up, it's not puffed up, it's a solid construction picture. It's not a picture of a bubble, it's a picture of a building, so you're strong. You've got a foundation. You're being built up. We're going to see this for weeks and weeks in Corinthians, always the goal in fellowship in the church is edification—building up. We speak of a building as an edifice. So, we come to church, we minister to one another, we study the Word to be edified, to be built up, not to be torn down, not to be stumbled, but we want to build each other up. That's what the gifts of the Spirit are for, we're going to see in just a few weeks. So, knowledge must be combined with God's love.

Where does love come from? It comes from the Holy Spirit, right? “. . . the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” If you're going to be a Christian who loves other people, then you have to be filled with the Spirit. When you're filled with the Spirit, then you have that agape love of God flowing out of your life toward others. It's so very important.

Look real quickly at 1 Corinthians 14:12 where Paul says, “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying”—there's the word again—“of the church.” So, you've got your spiritual gifts, and you're going in the gifts in the church, but what you really want to be focusing on is using your gifts to build others up and to edify others in the Lord.

Notice also in verse 2, no one has complete knowledge. We all have knowledge, but knowledge is not enough, and what knowledge we do have you want to be humble about because you don't know everything. Watch out for spiritual know-it-alls. Anytime you meet somebody that knows everything, he knows nothing. Run for your life. Look at verse 2, “And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” You know, the more you know, the less you know. The more you know, the more you realize you don't know everything.

When I was a young pastor I felt a little intimidated and thought I had to have an answer for

everybody that asked me a question. I had to figure it out or make something up or look impressive. Now, I just realize, I just say, "I don't know." I'm not afraid to say, "I don't know," when I'm preaching. You think, You're the preacher and you don't know? Yeah, I don't know. There's so much I don't know, and the more I do know, the more I realize I don't know. It should be producing knowledge. It should be producing humility, if we have the right attitude in our hearts toward what God is revealing to us. No one has complete knowledge or total understanding.

What the word in verse 2 means knowledge there, it means total understanding or total comprehension. Nobody understands everything. In 1 Corinthians 13 it says, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then"—when we see the Lord in heaven we'll see clearly—"face to face . . ."

If you know and love God though, we will also love the brethren. Look at verse 3. He says, "But if any man love God,"—so you don't want just knowledge, you want—" . . . love God, the same is known of him." God knows you, you know God. You know that God loves you, and you're secure in God's love and you're able to then function in the body of Christ. I love that Jesus actually said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." We shouldn't be quibbling over nonessentials. We shouldn't be quibbling over things that aren't black and white in the Bible. We shouldn't be condemning other people or looking down on other people, we should be loving them and praying for them. So, how 'bout you? Are you just puffed up with knowledge or do you love God and love other people?

Here's the second reason some gain for eating meat offered to idols and disregard for the weaker brother or sister, that is, they know that an idol is nothing, verses 4-7. They knew that an idol was nothing. Go to verse 4. He says, "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols,"—actually verses 1-3 are a general introduction to the subject of these three chapters. Now, he jumps into it with both feet and says, "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols,"—again, the phrase—"we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one." I'm going to come back to that. Verse 5, "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) 6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Verse 7, "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge"—not everyone has the understanding that an idol is nothing—"for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and"—if they do—"their conscience being weak is defiled." They act contrary to their conscience. If your conscience bothers you, then you shouldn't do that. Now, go back with me to verse 4, " . . . an idol is nothing . . ."

This, by the way, is a really great statement in that it's clearly teaching that there's only one true God. There's God's called that are called God, there's demigods and people call them gods, but there's really only one God. It makes it quite simple. "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.” The Bible is very, very clear, right? What God is that? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,”—the God of the Bible, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ our Lord.

We know the God is triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—but they’re still only one God. The way to understand that is that they’re one in essence, that is, nature. They’re one divine being, but they’re three in Persons. There’s God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There’s only one God. That’s the “knowledge” that we need to possess that there’s only one God and that an idol is nothing. That’s so very important.

I want you to flip in your Bible real quickly, but hold your place here in 1 Corinthians 8, turn to Psalm 115. Psalm 115:4-7, and look at what the psalmist says. He says, verse 4, “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.” They’re little gods they carve out of silver and gold, and they’re actually the product of their own hands. Verse 5, “They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not”—pathetic god—“They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.” Look at verse 8, “They that make them”—carve out their little false gods—“are like unto them”—they’re false—“so is every one that trusteth in them.”

You talk about false gods. You have eyes, so you carve little eyes on your god. You have a nose, so you carve a little nose on your god. You have ears, so you carve little ears on your god. God becomes a projection of yourself, and then you worship yourself. It’s interesting. Many times when the pagans were being attacked by an enemy in a war, they would have to flee and actually have to pick up their gods and carry them as they ran away. It’s pretty sad when you have to carry God -right?- or that you can lose God or someone can steal your God. These aren’t really truly God, so don’t get all freaked out. Even when the Bible refers to Satan as the god of this age, it doesn’t mean he’s divine, it doesn’t mean he’s a god, and the Bible says the heathen have many different gods. They’re not God, they’re small “g.” They’re not really, truly God. There’s only one true and living God, and only one God does exist is the God of creation, God who created the world, God who’s revealed Himself through the Scriptures. He’s the God who sustains all of us. Look at verse 4 again. It says, “. . . and that there is none other God but one.” The idea is that He sustains us, He’s created us, He’s the true and living God.

It says in verse 5 that the names and realities are different. What they are called and what they are are two different things. I’ve actually had Mormons quote verse 5 because they’re polytheistic. They believe in many gods. It says, “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)”—they quote the end of that verse that’s in parentheses. Paul isn’t saying there are lots of gods and lots of lords. He’s saying they claim there are. They say there are. What you claim and what you say can be two different things and indeed they are. So, there’s only one God. The one and true God is

the source of all things both physical and immaterial, and He is the goal and the purpose for all that is living.

Look with me at verse 6. It says, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things”—made and sustained and created—“and we by him.” It’s a marvelous statement that Paul makes about that God is one and that He is the sustainer and the One who’s made and produced all things. Now, there is one Lord, he mentions the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 6, “. . . and one Lord Jesus Christ,”—who is Lord. He is the source of all things, Colossians 1:16. He is the sustainer of all things, and He’s the goal of all things.

In verse 7 Paul points out one more truth in this verse, one that they no doubt knew yet had forgotten in the exercising of their liberty. Look at verse 7. He says, in conclusion here, “Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge,”—what knowledge has every man not have? That there’s only one God, that He’s the source and the sustainer of all things and we are created by Him and sustained by Him, and there’s only one God. Every man doesn’t have 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.” Paul is basically saying, “Look, if it bugs you, don’t do it.” Later in this section, Paul’s going to say, “If you get some meat in the market, don’t ask.” Don’t even ask the question, “Hey, excuse me. Is this meat offered to an idol?” Just get it and eat it and thank God for it. You don’t even need to ask. Some people don’t know that there’s only one God and their conscience is weak, and this is weak because they haven’t understood the truth of God’s Word and they aren’t trusting the Lord and they’re easily led astray and influenced.

It’s actually the weak believer that tends to be more legalistic. It’s the strong believer that tends to exercise greater liberty because he knows that an idol is nothing. He knows that there is only one God. He knows that intrinsically there’s no issue there, so the strong believer is the one with the greater liberty. The weak believer is the one with the less liberty.

Here’s the third and last section, and then the conclusion, verses 8-12. We know that food is not an issue with God. Food is not an issue of spirituality. This does have more of a general principle because we have so-called professing believers today that make a real big deal out of diet and dietary laws. Some of them want to go back under Judaism laws, others want to just create their own laws, and it may be that you’d be more healthy but it hasn’t gotten anything to do with your relationship to God. Look at verse 8. It says, “But meat commendeth us not to God”

Remember what Jesus said? He said, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man.” If you love meat, you love hamburgers, love to eat, you should say, “Thank God.” What goes in does not spiritually defile you. He says, “. . . but that which cometh out of the mouth,”—comes from the heart—“. . . for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” He says, verse 8, “for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.” You’re not more spiritual because you don’t eat meat. You might be more healthy, I don’t know, but you’re

not more spiritual. It's not a matter of spirituality. What you eat can affect you spiritually, if your body gets all messed up and tweaked out, but it's not an issue of your relationship to God. It doesn't commend us to God. " . . . if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse."

Here's the warning, "But take heed,"—here's the big point, verse 9—"lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak." That is one of the important principles of exercising Christian liberty. Make sure that if you're going to drink that or do that or go there or engage in that practice, that your activity does not stumble a weaker brother. Someone said, "We're to be building blocks, not stumbling blocks." We want our actions and our attitude and our lives to be building up and blessing other people.

Verse 10, "For if any man see thee,"—and that's the problem, the weaker brother sees the stronger brother eating the meat offered to idols and it causes him to stumble—"which hath knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened"—interesting, it's the same phrase and concept of love building up, now we're building them up in the wrong thing, things that are wounding their weak conscience—"to eat those things which are offered to idols." It's not a matter of a legalist just saying, "Well, you're not spiritual because you eat meat," it's a matter of a weak individual who feels that it's evil or wrong, sees you doing it, and they're emboldened or encouraged to do the same. Then their conscience bothers them, and they have actually sinned against their own conscience.

A conscience given by God is only as good as it is educated by the light of Scripture. What does Jiminy Cricket say, right? "Let your conscience be your guide," oh boy. You can get in big trouble if your conscience isn't influenced by the light of God's Word. I love the illustration that a conscience works like a sundial. How good is a sundial at telling the time on a cloudy day or a sundial telling the time after sunset? It doesn't work. So, your conscience needs the light of God's Word to educate it so that you can be sensitive to the law of the Lord and to the Spirit of God as He speaks to your own heart.

If someone sees you doing that "liberty," verse 10, and then they're emboldened to do something that they feel is against their conscience, then we've caused a weaker brother to stumble. Notice what happens, verse 11, "And through thy knowledge"—"I know that an idol is nothing. I know that there is only one God. I know that food's not an issue, so I'm going to do whatever I want to do. Don't bother me." He says, verse 11, "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Remember, he's talking about the importance of love, and what we need to realize is God loves them and Christ loves them, and He died for them. Why would you want to destroy someone's faith, " . . . for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren,"—and it is sin—"and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." Paul is basically saying, "You don't want to stumble a weaker brother or sister for whom Christ died." That should be your motivation.

Here's the conclusion, verse 13, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother"—or sister—"to offend"—means to stumble, it's the word *skandalízō*—to be scandalized or stumble—"I will eat no flesh while

the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” Whenever I read that, it just puts a smile on my face, praise the Lord. That’s the right attitude. That’s the right principle. If I eat meat and it could stumble someone else, then I will not eat meat. You can take all the other issues that people debate about, “Can a Christian do this? Can a Christian do that? Can a Christian do this?” If it’s going to offend someone, it’s going to stumble someone, I’m not talking about a legalist that tells you, “You can’t have drums in the church,” or “You have to have a suit and tie when you come to church or you’re not spiritual. The women can’t wear makeup,” or whatever, and they’re very legalistic. Sometimes they need to be rebuked, actually. But I’m talking about people that are weak who stumble into sin because we exercise our liberty in a way that emboldens them to do something that violates their own conscience.

The principle is in verse 13, “. . . I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” What it means is you lay aside your right, you know there’s no evil in it, you can partake of it, but you abstain in order out of love to help build up and assist and be a blessing to a weaker brother or sister in Christ.

In Philippians 2, did not Paul say, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought”—equality with God not something to hold onto, but emptied Himself, humbled Himself—“and took upon him the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” That’s that kenosis passage. If Jesus could leave heaven, if He could actually take on humanity and its limitations, and then He could go to the cross and give His life as a sacrifice for us, then why can’t I abstain from things that would cause someone else to stumble. Why would I unlovingly just say, “I don’t care what you think, I don’t care how it affects you, I’m going to do what I want to do. Don’t tell me what to do.”

Paul gives us this checklist. Here’s the checklist about Christian liberty: 1) Will it stumble a weaker brother or sister? 2) Is it beneficial or is it helpful? 1 Corinthians 6:12. 3) Is it enslaving? 1 Corinthians 6:12, “. . . I will not be brought under the power of any.” It’s okay for me to do something, but it will bring me into bondage, I’m not going to do it. 4) Will it build me up and others? 1 Corinthians 10:23. Will it build me up and will it build up others? 5) Will it glorify Christ? 1 Corinthians 10:31. If I do this, can I glorify Jesus Christ? 6) Will it help or hinder the winning of the lost? 1 Corinthians 10:33. Lastly, ask yourself, 7) is it Christlike? 1 Corinthians 11:1. Paul says, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Is it Christlike, what you’re thinking about doing? Let’s pray.