MESSY GRACE: **1 Cor wk 9 – Are you Truly Free?**

**Known for its crazy days & wild nights - lots of sex, binge drinking, and idol worship - then some became Christ followers. What now?**

**Struggling to live for Jesus in a culture pulling them in another direction. Having dealt with immaturity, disunity, sex, marriage, singleness – now issues of personal conviction.**

**What if in Kroger the meat section sign: We converted to worship of god Ra and have blessed and offered all this meat to Ra to bless. If you eat this, you will be blessed by Ra. Have a nice day. (Yes / No)**

**\*\* What would you do? Buy and eat / or go to another store?**

**\*\* Now - What if they then announce it would all be half price?**

**\*\* Who picked? no / yes (both are right = Christian liberty)**

**What do you do when you disagree with other Christians over issue of conviction? Has that ever happened to you? That is today’s issue.**

**1 Corinthians 8:1 Now about food sacrificed to idols… (more than just food)**

**Corinth – a port city and party city. Worship of idols was common and celebrated with feasts and massive BBQ’s.**

**They grew up w/ temple meals and parties – weekly & monthly.**

**Food offered to idols was divided into 3 portions: 1 - burnt in honor of the god / 1 - given to the worshiper / 1 - given to the priest at temple. There was a lot left over, sold it to resturant (taco stands) and markets.**

**It’s usually cheaper and Christians (like anyone) like bargains**

**Some were deeply offended and convicted about eating this – they saw it as inadvertently supporting idol worship and potential possession for evil meat “blessed” by an idol. SO - What do you do?**

**Paul deals with 3 things**

* **Should we eat meat purchased at a temple meat market?**
* **Should a Christian eat food from a pagan resturant?**
* **What if we are served meat offered to an idol?**

**How many of you struggled this week eating meat sacrificed to idols? No one - This actually has something to do w/ us.**

**How do we deal with different convictions in our church family?**

**Growing up - guy/girl swimming, no drums in the church, shorts in church, drinks in the auditorium… Still arguing today - Politics, movies, TV, music, clothes, alcohol, tattoos, piercings, dancing, gambling, fantasy books, vaccines, comics, cosplay, Halloween, worship styles, etc. – THE GRAYS!**

**Is this really what church is? Where do you / we draw the line?**

**1 Corinthians 8:1 Now about food sacrificed to idols: (before taking this on he gets to the heart) We know that “We all possess knowledge.” (the quotes refer to their words in the letters – you say you love the food in the market and know better that it means nothing…) But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.**

* **Knowledge alone only puffs up, but love builds up!**

**- Knowledge puffs up (pride & arrogance) - puffer fish (look what I know puff up) it is a repellant alone = and rarely settles it.**

**- Love builds up (encourages) - Love always trumps knowledge**

**(Jumbo glasses & little glasses) 2 lenses Knowledge and love.**

**Our decisions are to be viewed thru Conviction & Compassion**

**It’s been said some Christians grow while others swell!**

**Are you a puffer or a builder?**

**1 Cor 8:2 Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. (you may know better, but you’re not as smart as you think) 3 But whoever loves God is known by God.**

* **Being known is more important than being right**

**Being known by God (known as his child) The greatest knowledge is knowing God knows you. You can know Him – today (Luke 10:20)**

**Does God know you has his child? Greatest thing to ever know.**

**When we approach THE GRAYS – Get your glasses on – look at it with big understanding and big love!! Conviction and compassion.**

**(with this lens of love let’s talk about “a gray”) 1 Cor 8:4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: (food offered to idols then sold in the market) We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.”**

**There is only one true God – all others are false. They do not exist. There is no competition. Food offered to idols are simply offered to brick, stone, and wood. They are not real.**

* **There is only ONE who is always right – and you are not him**

**“There is no God but one” – we will never always be right**

**1 Cor 8:5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), (he is not saying they exist in reality – but that they do exist in statues and beliefs systems. There are many “so-called gods” - Hinduism alone has 33 million – there were many in Corinth) 6 yet for us (we know) there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (Rev 4:1, 7:10, Col 1:16-20)**

**V6 Paul gives a power statement: All the religions of the world are false**

**For There is ONE and only ONE God and Lord. *A Father* (knowable) Who is the source of all things and the destination of all things!**

**One Kurios (Lord God) Jesus- the active presence of the father and the sustainer of all life. Jesus the only way, truth, and life.**

**Other gods are not only false, but they are fake.**

**Like a confetti balloon - the polytheistic bubble bursts.**

**Paul says – we might know this…but - 1 Cor 8:7 But not everyone possesses this knowledge. (some Christians - still think other gods exist) Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, with and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. (some are convinced that you are eating food as an act of worship to a false idol and engaging in sinful activity - uninformed conviction) 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. (you are not more spiritual based on what you eat or don’t eat -**

**Sorry vegans, no carbs, no sodas, fast-food, all-natural peeps.**

**But - here is the real issue – 1 Cor 8:9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. (to make fall)**

* **Being right isn’t always right**

**Be careful of your freedom it can be a stumbling object to others. You’re claiming your rights, but what about their walk?**

**You might know an idol is nothing - But they don’t know.**

**You might know there is only one God - But they don’t know.**

**You might know these idols don’t actually exist - But they…**

**You might know food does not bring us under judgment - But…**

**1 Cor 8:10 For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge (freedom), eating in an idol’s temple, won’t that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? 11 So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge.**

**They will see you eat this food and think it is okay to participate in temple worship meals – seeing what you do is leading them into destructive sin. “Well, that is their problem!”**

**It’s your problem too - 12 When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. (By causing other people to sin, you are sinning against Christ)**

**Your freedom is causing another person to directly violate God’s will and clear commands. Our freedom can become sin.**

**It is easy for a Christian to say, “I answer to God and God alone” and ignore others. It is true we will answer to God alone, but we will also answer to God for how we have treated your brother/ sister in Christ.**

**Jesus - one of these to stumble - Luke 17:1-4**

* **Instead of asking, “Can I?” - Ask, “Should I?”**

**1 Cor 6:12, 10:23 - all things are acceptable – but not all things are profitable**

**I am not pandering – I am loving. I don’t want them to stumble.**

**Truth is - We react differently to this freedom Jesus gives:**

**Some, growing up in religion – swing the pendulum.**

**How far does our freedom allow us to go?**

**Out of fear of causing another to stumble…**

**\* Some go crazy with rules (legalism)**

**Regulations, Hail Marys, light candles, try harder, don’t do this, do this, Not only love neighbor, but love like this… not only read bible, but read like this. Result: guilt, exhaustion, shame, religion.**

* **When we teach this - we make pharisees not disciples.**

**\* Some just go crazy (lawlessness)**

**Do what you want, live it up! I’m not under the law! I’m forgiven & free! The Result: bondage to self or even to destructive behavior**

* **When we teach this - we are not making disciples at all.**

**Paul is says there are 2 types of people in church to be cautious of**

**1. The Legalist - those who turn the tools of faith, into the rules of faith.**

**2. The Lawless - life does not reflect Jesus in compassion or lifestyle**

**Both sides breed arrogance and are unhealthy and dangerous**

**(Several chapters in Galatians and Philippines deals with this)**

**This exposes two things Christians tend to do:**

**Syn-cretism – mixing the world w/ God (philosophies, opinions, lifestyles, & choices - to the point you can’t tell the difference)**

**Sec-tarianism – divide ourselves from the world (fear of mixing we don’t involve ourselves, but separate completely – the holy huddle)**

**Syncretism – turns freedom into a self-centered person with little self-control (lawlessness) leading to unfaithfulness**

**Sectarianism – leads to religious insignificance / church with no real impact on lives – a bunch of spiritual weirdoes (legalism)**

**Chapter ends with 1 Cor 8:13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.**

* **Be willing to give up (rights), to build up (lives)**

**Real freedom it points to Jesus. We see this in chap 9 w/ Paul next wk.**

**In Acts 15:29 – people coming to Jesus from other cultures – what do we do? What rules must they follow. A big council meeting of the apostles.**

**They sent a letter to the churches – saying 2 things**

**- Be mindful of other convictions “When you sit down to eat abstain from pagan sacrificed food, bloody drinks and strangled meat”**

**- And live a sexually pure life – “abstain from sexual immorality”**

**There are things I chose to not do as a Christians as to not cause anyone to stumble. Not because I can’t – but I shouldn’t.**

**I am free to say – NO, to the things I have a right to do.**

**How do we operate with liberty and avoid legalism & lawlessness?**

**\*\* Freedom has two lenses: Love and Knowledge (jumbo glasses)**

**And**

**\*\* Freedom has two limitations: Paul gives 2 limits to our freedom**

**In chap 8 and here Paul gives 2 freedom boundaries (layout)**

**Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (We are free!!! Saved by grace, not by our actions - However…) 13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.**

**Boundary 1. The boundary of command - God’s clear commands**

**We do not have freedom to ignore or deny clear house rules of God’s family. Playing football, clear guidelines w/ a lot of liberty on the field.**

**The bible is crystal on drunkenness, sexual purity, rage, abusive words – the bible is clear.**

**1 Peter 2:16 - Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.**

**Boundary 2. The boundary of love**

**Will this cause another person to sin or miss Jesus? If yes, then then do not do it. If no, circle back to the command before you do it.**

**Our freedom is given to clear the brush from our life to pursue Christ best and to help others see Christ best!**

**Our freedom is to be governed by love.**

**As important as freedom is, love is more important. For example**

**- A missionary in a new culture is free to dress and eat as they want, but because they seek to lovingly reach them, they embrace the clothing and food that they don’t necessarily like**

**- Although some may enjoy a glass of wine or beer at a celebrative meal – when the possibility of someone with an alcoholic past is present, you don’t.**

**A disciple is free to love others more than our freedoms.**

**Beware of the extremes of legalism and lawlessness - find a love-based liberty – based on conviction & compassion**

**I want to end this point – that will lead us to next week**

* **There is no cookie cutter Christians**

**We have clear guidelines from God - from there, we have liberty to reach people in the context of wherever they are in life with the hope & healing of Jesus.**

**This is not the end of this discussion –**

**Next week – Pauls’ personal issues of freedoms.**

**Just like many of us – he is trying to find balance too.**

**Pass out Jumbo glasses**

**PAUL’S EXAMPLE: 1 Corinthians 9**

**He chose personal sacrifice over personal rights.**

**“It’s not what I can gain, but who I can gain.”**

**(wk 10 35:26)**

**WHO’S IN THE CROWD, AND HOW DO WE TREAT THEM?**

**(adapted from Dr. Lawrence Osborne)**

**1 Cor 8:7-13, Col 2:16-23, Gal 5:1, Ro 14:1-23, Luke 17:1-4, Gal 2:11-14, 3:1-5**

**► The Strong Christian:**

**Not necessarily better - “neither is better” this is not about who is better!**

**Enjoy your freedom**

**► The Truly Weaker Brother:**

**In danger of falling way or going back. I don’t want to be sucked back into that - I was in bondage. Don’t want anything to do with it. Alcoholic. That is why we do not want those at church events.**

**Put aside your freedom**

**► The Professional Weaker Brother:**

**The Christians who arrogantly tries to control others – this what I think and this should be the same for everyone.**

**Rebuke and teach in love**

**► The Phantom Weaker Brother:**

**The “they” – if you do this “they” will do this – “they” will think this – who is the “they”**

**Just ignore and enjoy your freedom**

**1 Corinthians 10:18 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord’s jealousy? Are we stronger than he?**

**The Believer’s Freedom**

**23 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. 24 No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.**

**25 Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, 26 for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”**

**27 If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. 28 But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. 29 I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? 30 If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?**

**31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.**