

Unholy Cow?

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 19th, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

~1st Corinthians 8:2-3 (NASB)

1) Knowledge Without Restraint

- A) The followers of Jesus Christ in Corinth appear to have been engaged in a “back & forth” conversation with Paul regarding issues about social gatherings which were associated with idol worship (1st Corinthians 8:1).

- B) Paul seems to quote a bit of the Corinthian letter, “we know that we all have knowledge...” but counters their quote, noting that knowledge can make one arrogant, to the extent of lacking love for God and for others (8:1-2).

- C) Sometimes, our own knowledge of God and Scripture can become stumbling blocks in our lives! When knowledge becomes divorced from love, it becomes a weapon which can harm others -- and ourselves.

- D) Of course, the Corinthians loved God (8:3), and Paul warns them that “if” they love God, then God knows them (and knows their true heart motivations).

2) Knowledge About Social Gatherings/Idols

- A) Turning his attention to the specific issues of idolatry, Paul again affirms aspects of the Corinthian's letter (we know...), but shifts the focus (again), away from the issue of idolatry, and onto Jesus Christ (8:4-6).
- B) The primary issue was that some Christians were going to "social events" which were being held in pagan temples (houses of idolatry). They were not attending these events to participate in idolatry ("there is no such thing as an idol"), but just to be socially appropriate.
- C) The Corinthians were reasoning that since they had "knowledge" (they knew God), and they knew there was really "no such thing as an idol," and there was only "one God..." -- what was the harm in eating at pagan banquets?

3) The Principle Of Loving Restraint

- A) Rather than fight the Corinthians on their "rights," Paul reminds the "stronger" of the "weaker" who might be offended by "socially questionable" practices. It wasn't the food which was the issue, but its association (8:7-8).
- B) Paul calls on the stronger brother to show "loving restraint" toward the weaker brothers who might be distracted from Jesus and even "ruined" for something as non-essential as a social gathering (8:9-11).
- C) Thus, when our actions might lead a weaker brother or sister into confusion or sin, we are not just sinning against them, but more significantly, Jesus Christ (8:12).
- D) Therefore, show loving restraint whenever possible, so the focus of our lives remains on Jesus Christ (8:13).