

1 Corinthians Part 3

Love Builds Up

BIG IDEA Christian freedom and spiritual gifts must be governed by love and used to build up the gathered church.

Series question: What problem is Paul addressing, and how does the gospel answer it?

The thread through chapters 8 to 14

Paul addresses food offered to idols, apostolic rights, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, and orderly worship. One question joins them: Will believers use knowledge, freedom, and gifts to elevate themselves or to build Christ's people in love?

Follow the movement

PASSAGE	LOVE BUILDS UP
8:1-11:1	Freedom seeks another person's good and refuses participation in idolatry.
11:17-34	The Lord's Supper proclaims Christ's self-giving death and makes one body visible.
12:1-31	The Spirit gives different gifts to interdependent members for the common good.
13:1-13	Every gift and sacrifice is empty without patient, truthful, enduring love.
14:1-40	Gathered worship favors intelligibility, edification, self-control, and order.

Three settings for idol food

SETTING	PAUL'S DIRECTION
Temple feast	Do not participate in the religious ceremony. Flee idolatry.
Marketplace	Eat without anxious investigation; the earth belongs to the Lord.
Private home	Eat freely, but abstain when love for another person's conscience and witness requires it.

Questions for Christian freedom

QUESTION	TEXT
Is it beneficial, not merely permissible?	10:23
Will it build another person up?	10:23-24
Am I seeking another's good?	10:24, 33
Can I do it for God's glory?	10:31
Will it help or hinder gospel witness?	10:32-33
Does it reflect Christ's self-giving pattern?	11:1

The Lord's Supper and one body

The Corinthians remembered Christ's body while humiliating members of Christ's body. Receiving the meal 'in an unworthy manner' describes careless, divisive participation; it does not mean that some sinners have made themselves worthy. Self-examination leads believers to faith, repentance, reconciliation, and Christ's grace.

Many gifts one purpose

PAUL'S TEACHING	WHY IT MATTERS
The same Spirit gives different gifts	Diversity does not threaten Christian unity.
Each manifestation is for the common good	A gift serves people rather than proving status.
Every member belongs and every member is needed	Visibility is not the measure of spiritual importance.
Without love even impressive gifts are nothing	Character and service govern the use of ability.
Worship must build up and remain orderly	Intelligibility and self-control protect the whole church and its witness.

LOVE IN ITS CHURCH SETTING Love is patient and kind. It refuses envy, boasting, dishonor, self-seeking, resentment, and delight in wrongdoing. Love rejoices with the truth, protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres, and never fails (13:4-8).

The Gospel Then and Now

Church reality then Corinthians used knowledge, rights, wealth, and visible gifts to distinguish themselves from other believers.

Church temptation now We can turn freedom into self-assertion, Communion into routine, gifts into status, and worship preferences into contests.

Gospel-shaped church Because Christ gave himself for one body, believers surrender rights when love requires it, honor every member, and use every gift to build others up.

Discuss

1. When can exercising a legitimate Christian freedom become unloving?
2. How can a church contradict the Lord's Supper while using the correct words and elements?
3. What happens when a visible gift or ministry becomes proof of greater spiritual importance?
4. Which Corinthian problem most closely resembles churches today?
5. What would it look like for our congregation to measure worship and ministry by whether they build others up?

For further study

ECO connection Essential Tenets III.C, covenant life in the church, and III.D, faithful stewardship of all of life. eco-pres.org/constitution/

Read more online BibleProject, Book of 1 Corinthians Guide: bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-1-corinthians/

CLASS RESOURCES AND UPCOMING LESSONS

keithbreuer615.github.io/pauls-letters-class/



BEFORE NEXT WEEK Read 1 Corinthians 15-16. Mark what Paul says happened to Christ, what will happen to believers, and why resurrection makes present service worthwhile.