

LOVE FOR THE WEAK

1 Corinthians 8:9 “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”

St. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8:13, “If food causes my brother to fall (sin), I will never eat meat to eternity, lest I cause my brother to fall (sin.)” God’s instruction to the Corinthians, through Paul, regarding eating meat offered to idols was that the meat was simply meat. Eating it was not in and of itself a sin. However, there were many in the Corinthian church who had recently become Christians. Previously, they had worshipped these idols by eating meats offered in sacrifice to those idols. They still struggled with their former idolatrous spiritual life. Their consciences simply would not permit them to eat that meat.

A contemporary comparison would be how do we as Christians use our Christian freedom in regard to the consumption of alcohol. The Bible nowhere forbids taking a drink of an alcoholic beverage. However, in this country it is estimated that 5.8% of American adults over 18—about 14.4 million people—have an alcohol use disorder. This includes 9.2 million men and 5.3 million women, or 7.6% of all adult men and 4.1% of all adult women.

Although you as a Christian have the freedom to consume alcoholic beverages what is your responsibility toward your brothers and sisters where such consumption for them is harmful? If you invite guests to your home for a meal and you know that one or more of them is an alcoholic or a recovering alcoholic, you have the freedom to serve beer, wine or a cocktail, but St. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 8:9 serve to guide you in what you should do, “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak (your guests.)”

St. Paul wrote concerning his ministry (life), “now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry. . .” (2 Corinthians 6:3) Your life is a ministry to your brother, sister, neighbor, family, friend, work associate and the like. Jesus calls upon you to witness the saving Gospel to them. Paul gives further guidance in Galatians 5:13 “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For

the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
As God in Christ has unconditionally loved you, He calls upon you through that love be concerned for and build up those around you, especially the weak.

Prayer: Lord, send Your Spirit to fill my heart with love and compassion for all people, but especially those who are weak, struggle and need encouragement. In Jesus' name. Amen.

"Come, follow Me," the Savior spake, "All in My way abiding;
Deny yourselves, the world forsake, Obey My call and guiding.
O bear the cross, whate'er betide, Take My example for your guide.

"I am the light, I light the way, A godly life displaying;
I bid you walk as in the day; I keep your feet from straying.
I am the way, and well I show How you must sojourn here below.

"My heart abounds in lowliness, My soul with love is glowing;
And gracious words My lips express, With meekness overflowing.
My heart, My mind, My strength, My all, To God I yield, on Him I call.

"I teach you how to shun and flee What harms your soul's salvation,
Your heart from ev'ry guile to free, From sin and its temptation.
I am the refuge of the soul And Lead you to your heav'nly goal."

Then let us follow Christ, our Lord, And take the cross appointed
And, firmly clinging to His Word, In suff'ring be undaunted.
For those who bear the battle's strain The crown of heav'nly life obtain.
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