



Epiphany 4 B ARTICLE NO. 2006.145
Epistle

An example of Charity
1 Corinthians 8:1-13



Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

But if any man love God, the same is known of him. 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. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) 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. Howbeit there is not in every man 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. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.



WAESHAEEL

Glen Miller

Refs

Men have their respective gods in their brothels, their kitchens, and even in their prisons. Therefore heaven is crowded with innumerable gods of its own - not only these but also others belonging to the Romans.
Tertullian c. 197

New converts from paganism called "children", "little one", "weak one"

Much of this tract is commentary - don't take it as Gospel. It is here to encourage meditation and study. Use your gift of discernment, to find the truth.

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An example of charity

Remember that the Corinthians were pagans before Paul converted them, and it was common for them to eat meat (food) at the sacrificial banquets in the temple of Apollo where the food had first been offered as a sacrifice to the pagan gods [see Epiphany 2B]. They also purchased such food in the market. Now that the Christianized Corinthian community knows better, and now understand that the food from the temple is just ordinary food, they feel proud of this knowledge (puffed up). One of their slogans was "Meat for the belly, and the belly for meat" meaning - we are free now to eat all foods. But, Paul says, though they know that it is not blasphemous to eat things that others have offered to the temple gods, they are setting a bad example to the new converts [children] who have not yet reached spiritual maturity. It is better to think of the spiritual welfare of the [children], and not eat at the temple. At the close of the argument, Paul said he would rather be a vegetarian than do something that might cause a [little one] to commit a trespass.

Paul warns the brethren that even though they may understand this teaching, there is much that they do not yet understand. If they love God, however, He knows what is in their heart. They are not offending God [by eating food sacrificed]. Though they know that there is only one God, and one Lord Jesus Christ, from whom everything comes, and that God does not mind what food they eat, and that therefore they are free to eat meats sacrificed, there are some [new converts - weak ones] who do not understand these things. If a weak one, seeing them boldly eating at the temple, joins them and eats what he thinks is the food of some god, his belief in the existence of that god, will cause him to perish, and they will have undone Christ's work.

(1 Corinthians 12:2)
Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

(1 Corinthians 6:13)
Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: ...

Faith, free in Christ owes no abstinence from particular meats - even to the Jewish Law. For the Apostle has allowed the whole range of the meat market to everyone.
Tertullian c. 213

(1 Corinthians 8:10)
For if any man see thee which hast knowledge **sit at meat in the idol's temple**, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

sit at meat (c. 1600 England) = to lie at a table, eat together, dine.

Additional Comments

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And, Paul continues, when you do something that causes a brother, who does not know better, to commit sin, the sin is attributed to you, and it is you who sin against Christ. Paul says: to avoid this myself, I no longer will eat any flesh at all.

Charity here does not mean love as we commonly understand it. *Love* is a common translation for *charity* in the NRSV and other corporate Bibles^A. But in the BCP we say *love and charity*, so a distinction is indicated. Here, in this lecture by Paul,

charity means:

the heartfelt concern for the welfare of another brother, a willingness to help him understand the 'rules of living', the courage to correct him if he is about to commit a sin, and self-sacrifice, if it will help to perfect him.

How far have we fallen in our duty to be charitable to others? When love is used as a synonym for charity, charity goes out the window.

With "charity" replaced by "love" today
The Brethren, who begin to stray,
get hugs and kisses, come what may.
Why don't we say, "You are gone astray".
waeshael 2006

Comment on privacy amongst the congregation.

In the Anglican and Episcopal Church our relationship with Christ is considered very private and not a subject for discussion. This privacy gets in the way of doing missionary work amongst "our own people". So, Anglican missions are often to overseas locations, where there is no chance of embarrassing ourselves by raising the topic of GOD. I was at a Episcopal dinner party last year where the subject of Christ was raised and a member who should have been more sympathetic suggested that it was not a fit place to discuss religion, and refused to be drawn in. Owing to this reluctance to discuss God at meetings and after Sunday services, a local Episcopal Church has established a number of small group meetings, where video taped lectures on the gospel create an atmosphere that encourages discussions about Christ. What a comparison with Paul's Corinthians who talked nonstop about the gospel. Don't you wish there were more people in your life like that?

Refs

Holy Communion
BCP 1662

"Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in **love and charity** with your neighbours..."

(2 Thessalonians 1:3) We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the **charity of every one of you all toward each other** aboundeth;

(2 Timothy 3:10) But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, **charity**, patience,

Doing Theology

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Make a commitment now, that you will no longer stand by when you see a brother about to commit a sin, that you will walk up to him and say
"My friend, I know that you mean well, but what you are suggesting is against the teachings of Christ, and I will be remiss in my duty to God if I say nothing to you, and I will be held accountable for my negligence." Then quote the scripture, and talk about it until he/she understands it. If the penny doesn't drop, then both walk to the nearest fellow with knowledge, and discuss it again.

Are you doing anything that might be misunderstood by a "little one" [a beginner]. Examine your behavior, and see if anything you do could be viewed by others as something 'not right' for a Christian.

If you are being uncharitable (in Paul's sense of the word), be ready to explain your behavior to God, or be charitable.

Amori Christi
et Ecclesiae -
Glen C. Miller
OSV

The Views expressed here are strictly those of the author and probably disagree with what you have previously thought. Read other commentaries - meditate on the original KJV.