**Loving One Another with Your Conscience**

**Randy Boltinghouse 1/24/2021**

**1 Corinthians 8**

**Now concerningfood offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.**

**Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.”For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.**

**However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eatingin an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.**

**BIG IDEA: We embrace matters of first importance with *courage and conviction*. We embrace matters of second importance with *wisdom and balance*. We embrace matters of third importance with *humility and restraint.***

What does it mean to engage in doctrinal triage? According to Randy it is “ranking or prioritizing biblical teachings of Christianity”. Randy summarized three “levels” of doctrines:

1. Matters of **first importance**: Those doctrines that, if added to or subtracted from, you don’t have Christianity.
2. Matter of **second importance**. Interpretations about certain teachings.
3. Matters of **third importance:** These are issues that the Bible neither approves of nor prohibits. Another term for these is “matters of conscience”.

1 Corinthians 8 concerns itself with the third tier of doctrines and how we love one another with our consciences.

* We do not have a problem with meat sacrificed to idols in our culture, but we do have matters of conscience that can cause rifts in the body and distress for newer or less mature believers. What are some present day issues that Randy mentioned in his sermon that cause us trouble in the body of Christ? What would you add to that list?
* Read Romans 14:1-5; 19-23.
  + Consider the characteristics of American freedom. What freedoms and “rights” do we take for granted? How is America’s idea of freedom different than the Christian freedom Paul puts forth in this passage and in 1 Corinthians 8?
  + What does it mean to say that “the exercise of freedom is never simply personal”? How does this statement change the way your view freedom in the context of the church and the wider culture?
  + When does the exercise of Christian freedom do harm to the body of Christ? Why is it so such a serious matter?
* Randy talked about two ways to look at disagreements. The first, **a battle of messages,** mounting a defense, naming who’s right and who’s wrong, and ultimately winning. It is a competition, and your conversation partner is your opponent. The second, a **learning conversation,** assumes that you may not know all there is to know about a certain issue. It is not about winning a point, but rather growing in understanding and closeness to your brother or sister.
  + What is our default mode of handling disagreements?
  + In matters of conscience, what would a conversation with whom you disagree look like if you considered it a learning conversation?
* On Sunday, we recited the Apostle’s Creed as a church body. End your time together reciting the creed as a group.

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.** **I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.**