

**Victory of the Lamb – Foolproof - 1 Corinthians 8 – Choice of Freedom and Love**  
**January 23, 2022 - Pastor Bill Limmer**

20 Questions is a classic guessing game that people have been enjoying for decades. The basic premise is that one person chooses something (really anything) and gives the category it belongs to (such as person, place or thing). And the other players have 20 questions to guess what it is. 20 questions. That is different than the typical five-year-old. The typical 5-year-old asks 525,600 questions per day. People had a lot of questions for Jesus. People also had a lot of questions for Paul. And today as we continue our series **Foolproof**. We are going to look at the one of the questions they had and answer this question: **What are the keys to living a foolproof life in a divided setting?**

It is an unusual question. 1 Corinthians 7 and 8: **Now for the matters you wrote... about food sacrificed to idols:** So, they had a question about food sacrificed to idols. Now exactly a big question at all in our day but it was back then. Bear with me and I promise you will see how the answer applies to our lives every day.

Food sacrificed to idols. Picture it this way: Bob has lived in Corinth his whole life. And he is a recent convert to Christianity. While Steve is new resident to Corinth, but he has been a Christian since he was little. The two met each other for the first time at the Corinth Fitness Center. Bob invites Steve to church. Which was great since Steve is new in town and not sure if or where any Christian churches are in Corinth. The two built up a great relationship through their work outs and through the church.

One Friday, after a workout, Steve asks Bob if he wants to go grab a bite to eat on Saturday night. Bob says, "That sounds great."

Steve says, "Cool. I will buy. I got this gift card to The Steak House, in the Third Ward. I hear it is really good."

Bob says, "The Steak House in the Third Ward? Umm, I can't go there."

Steve: "Why not? I hear it is really good. I'm buying."

And Bob is like, "Because the Steak House in the Third Ward is connected to the pagan Temple."

Steve quizzes, "What does that have to do with anything?"

Bob says, “Well before I became a Christian I used to go to the Temple. In fact, I grew going to that Temple with my family. And we did all the things in that Temple everything from prostitution to sacrificing bulls to idols. And I know that part of the meat that is sacrificed is sold to restaurants. And I know that the meat is sold to the Steak House. So when we have those steaks, those steak have been sacrificed to idols and I can’t do that.”

Steve responds, “What does that matter? You and I know those idols do not really exist. Who cares?”

Bob says, “I know what goes on there. The memories are still too fresh. I can’t do that.”

But Steve says, “but you are not a part of it now.” And breaks into his version of the Disney song Let it Go. There is tension between Steve and Bob.

And Paul goes on. 1 Cor 8: 1-3 **We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. <sup>2</sup> Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. <sup>3</sup> But whoever loves God is known by God.** They both have knowledge about the issue. For Steve, the knowledge was in his head and in his heart. For Bob the knowledge was in his head, but not in his heart. Bob is struggling over this issue emotionally.

Steve has all this theology, all this knowledge, and he knows what is right. And that is a good thing. But in this case, it is not the most important thing. There is a word play on the word “know.” There is a word for “know” that means head knowledge and a word for “know” that means you know it by experience it. It has touched your head and your heart. Steve knows his Bible, he knows his theology, he knows what is right and he is going to push for what is right because he is right. But love is more important. You can brag all you want about knowing something, but it is the one that loves is the one who shows that he knows God and that God knows him. Here is one connection point for us in our culture. **What are the keys to living a foolproof life in a divided setting?**

**Key 1. Knowledge makes us feel right, but it is love that is right.**

Why does our culture say things like don’t talk about politics and religion? Because people are always trying to prove they are right, instead of demonstrating that they are loving.

1 Corinthians 8:4-6 **So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.”** <sup>5</sup> For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), <sup>6</sup> yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Paul is saying, when you boil it all down. we are free to eat the meat that is sacrificed to idols because while people may think there are idols, there aren't. But it is more complicated than that. There is more than just right and wrong,

And so he continues. 1 Corinthians 8:7 **But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do** Paul is saying that not everyone had this head knowledge. And there are some that have the head knowledge but not heart knowledge because of their past experiences.

Remember: we don't win God approval by not eating meat or lose his approval if we do. Paul is making a distinction between what is a moral issue – we have a clear passage from Scripture to tell us to act a certain way or not act a certain way and **adiaphora**. Do you know what adiaphora is? **Adiaphora – is something that is neither commanded nor forbidden.** Paul is saying there is no command that you must eat meat and there is no command that you must not eat meat. You have the right to choose what you are going to do when it is a matter of adiaphora.

But he goes on: 1 Corinthians 8:9-13.<sup>9</sup> **Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.** <sup>10</sup> For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? <sup>11</sup> So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. <sup>12</sup> When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

Back in Corinth and today we get confused on what is a Law issue and what is an issue of adiaphora. A lot of times we make tradition a moral issue instead of adiaphora. We get confused over morals and adiaphora.

By using the word *weak*, Paul by default is letting us know there are the strong as well. There are weak brothers and sisters and strong brothers and sister. And what he is really talking about is a person's conscience is strong or weak. In fact, we are all weak and we are all strong. It is just about the issue.

I have some issues that I'm strong in and some that I'm weak in. Same for you. Strong means you have some freedom. Weak brother is not free to move on it. That is the tension. What we are learning is that we are not all on the same page. When we keep parading in front of someone what we are free to do but they are uncomfortable to do. It causes tension and stress. And it can lead them to what they really don't want to do. Even if the action is ok, we are leading them to sin against their tender conscience and that is not ok. The way we handle our freedom, is important. Even if it is something that is not moral issue. Let me put it in today's terms: **What are the keys to living a foolproof life in a divided setting?**

**Key 2: just because you have the right to do something doesn't mean it is the right and loving thing to do.**

Here is an example of harmful it can be when we do what we have the right to do. Let's say you are coming up to a roundabout. And there is a car on your right coming into the roundabout. There is no one coming on your left, so you have the right to continue through the roundabout. But there is that car that is coming into the roundabout from your right. As you are looking at that car, you perceive that it is not slowing down. Furthermore, you can see the driver reach back to the backseat to give something to the child in her car seat. And a second or two later your cars collide. There is a crash in the roundabout.

The police officer arrives on scene in no time. And he begins to take your side of the story. You tell the police officer what happened. How you looked to your left and no one was coming and so you entered the roundabout. And that you saw the car coming from the right. The police officer asks, "Did you slow down?"

"No," you say, "because I had the right of way." You continue with your story and say that you could even see the driver reach back to the child in the backseat.

And the police officer says, "But you didn't yield?"

"That's right. I had the right of way. It is the principle of the matter," you say.

The police officer shakes his head and writes you a ticket for causing an accident.

When it comes to our freedom Jesus says, you had the right of way and you plowed into him and wrecked his conscience. And we say, "Yep he has issues." Jesus says, "No, you and I have issues."

Jesus died for all people, including the weak. People mess up, people don't always have head and heart knowledge clicking together. We sin against the weak by using our freedom to lead to sin against their conscience, we are sinning against Christ. When we wound them, we wound Jesus.

Steve would say, "So I'm not supposed to drag my friend up to the Steak House to eat a delicious steak that I am going to pay because he has a weak conscience." Right. "But it is not a sin." Right. "So I can go to eat there by myself and don't tell him." It sounds like hypocrisy. But it is not because it is not a moral issue.

Paul says, I will give up my rights, my freedom so that I don't wound someone because I love them and consider them more important than myself. **What are the keys to living a foolproof life in a divided setting?**

**Key 3: knowledge puffs up but love builds up.**

If anyone ever in the history of the world had rights, it is Jesus. He created the whole world. In him we live and move and have our being. He is the one who has given us everything we have-He is God. Philippians 2 What does using our rights look like in a cross-cultural Jesus kingdom - **Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. <sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature<sup>[a]</sup> God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature<sup>[b]</sup> of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in**

**appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!**

It is not the sinful nature way, it is not the freedom way, it is not even the American way, but it is the loving way, the Christ like way, the Foolproof way, to let go of your rights, because you consider the other person more important than you.

Think about all your relationships, the relationships you don't have, all your attitudes, all your political leanings, all your religious leanings, and all your rights, and Who do you need to give up your rights to be like Jesus gave up his rights for you? Who do you need to love like Christ loves you? And that is the foolproof way of the wisdom of God.