

Paul addresses a significant and important issue in the Corinthian church: what to do about food sacrificed to idols? This issue was of no small importance in the world of first century Corinth because the society was thoroughly pagan and routinely sacrificed animals to local gods as part of life. How does Paul respond?

I. Our God Is One

- A. Paul responds by confirming that our God is one. It's interesting how Paul begins in verses 1-3. The Corinthians have asked the Apostle a question and he answers them. What does he say? He begins with a warning against relying on knowledge alone (verses 1-2). He says that the Corinthians have knowledge, but that knowledge itself doesn't save. God knows the one who loves him, says Paul (verse 3).
- B. The Apostle encourages the Corinthians (and us) in verses 1-3 toward humility. Undoubtedly the Corinthians were proud of their great knowledge, intelligence and learning. They had written to Paul about this issue of sacrifices to idols. The Apostle answers them by calling them to love, by emphasizing God's uniqueness and by stressing Christ's supremacy. Meat sacrificed to idols may seem odd or strange to us because we live in another culture (although we have our own idols). But let's get into a time machine and go to the world of Corinth in the first century.
- C. The context is that there are many gods in Corinth. Multiple deities were worshipped in the Greco-Roman world and we know from the book of Acts and from Paul's other letters that Christianity was unique on account of its insistence upon one God. For the Jew, the "Shema Israel" ("Hear, O Israel" from Deuteronomy 6:4) was something so well-known that any young Jewish boy could recite it.
- D. But for the Corinthian Gentiles, formerly pagans, the concept of a single God was something very new and strange. So Paul confirms in verse 6 that we worship God alone. And we have only one Lord, Jesus Christ. We tend to take for granted what Paul is teaching here, but we must think about how radical this statement was in the first century in one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire. Paul reinforces the truth that God is one and that the Corinthians must understand that truth in order to address these questions about meat sacrificed to idols.
- E. It's also important for us not to forget our own idols, although they are different from the Corinthian idols. We are surrounded by many things that take our time away from being with God. We can say that we believe in and worship only one God, but isn't the struggle not to worship those idols? Deuteronomy 6:4 is a good starting point to give us what we need in order to remember that we serve a unique and single God.

II. But Our God Has Three Persons

- A. God has three persons. We worship a single God, but one Who has three persons, two of Whom are mentioned in verse 6. We dare not neglect the doctrine of the Trinity. There are many people who say that they believe in God, but they don't believe in the Triune God. James says clearly that the demons believe and shudder (2:19). If we don't grasp what the Bible teaches about the Trinity, we will not be able to explain to others Whom God is and how He saves us.
- B. God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Peter 1:1-2). We worship God in three persons. Our God is one, but in His deity the Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist eternally (Jesus was, of course, made incarnate at His birth, but He exists as part of the Trinity with neither beginning nor end). Without a doubt, for the Corinthians (and for many today), the Trinity seemed like a radical and new idea. But it's the truth that the Bible teaches. Paul obviously was used to opposition. What happened on Mars Hill? Paul taught and some mocked him, yet others believed (Acts 17:22-34).
- C. Understanding this concept of the Trinity is so important that Paul does two things before answering the Corinthians' questions about meat sacrificed to idols: First, he calls for humility and love of God, and second, he confirms that God is one and that Jesus is the only Lord. There are many who say that they

believe in God with no idea of who He is (e.g., polls consistently state that a majority of Americans "believe in God"). We cannot neglect the study of the Triune God.

III. And Everything Exists Through Our God

- A. The last part of verse 6 says that everything exists through the Lord Jesus Christ, something Paul says elsewhere (Colossians 1:15-18). We don't have life, or air, or anything else without the Lord Jesus' existing. Paul focuses on Christ's supremacy and His absolute rule over all His creation.
- B. Do you know that you can't do anything without Jesus? That you don't breathe without Him? That you have no life without Him? Every breath we take in our lungs depends on the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing that functions in this universe without Jesus, as the Apostle said to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:28).
- C. Paul answers the Corinthians by urging humility about their knowledge, about loving God because he who loves Him is known by Him, and by confessing their absolute dependence on Jesus Christ, the only Lord.

IV. Conclusion

What or whom are you trusting? The world or God? Your own idea of who God is or what the Bible teaches? Do you trust a remote deity or the Triune God from Scripture? Our God is one, and we worship Him in spirit and in truth. He is revealed in three distinct persons, each equal to the other, and all working together to perform the will of the Triune God. Let us trust 100% in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because without trusting the Triune God we are lost. May God the Father enlighten us through His Holy Spirit so that we believe in our only Lord, Jesus Christ. Only in Him do we have the hope and the assurance of eternal life.