

## Worksheet 7: 1 Corinthians 8:1–9:27

**Introduction:** In chapter 8, Paul picks up a new problem (the issue of food offered to idols) that was reported to him in the letter from Corinth. This problem occupies an extended space in the second half of First Corinthians, continuing through to 11:1. Our study this week will only cover a portion of Paul's discussion of this topic.

Chapter 8 introduces the basic outline of the problem. Apparently, people in the church at Corinth held to different positions on whether it was appropriate for Christians to eat food that was offered to idols at pagan temples. Some believed they had liberty to do so on the basis of their "knowledge" that idols are powerless (8:4), while others could not do so because of conscience (8:7). Paul challenges those who do not share the qualms of the "weak" to limit their freedom in consideration of others (8:9).

In chapter 9, Paul's logic takes a surprising turn. Suddenly, Paul is defending his own rights and authority as an apostle. Apparently, some at Corinth may have been personally attacking Paul for various reasons. Their rejection of Paul meant that they had rejected his previous instructions on dealing with food offered to idols. Paul responds by defending his apostleship (9:1–14), and then reaffirming his apostolic rights (9:15–18), including his freedom to accept or reject various kinds of foods (9:19–23). In doing this, Paul seeks ultimately to exhibit self-discipline in his pursuit of his apostolic calling to preach the gospel (9:24–27).

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
- II. Response to Oral Reports (1:10-6:20)
  - A. A Proper Perspective on Christian Ministers and Ministry (1:10-4:21)
  - B. Immorality in the Church (5:1-13)
  - C. Disputes Between Believers (6:1-11)
  - D. Limitations on Freedom in Christ (6:12-20)
- III. Responses to a Letter from the Corinthians (7:1-16:4)
  - A. Matters related to Sex and Marriage (7:1-40)
  - B. Matters related to Idol Feasts (8:1-11:1)**
    - 1. Food Offered to Idols (8:1-13)**
    - 2. Paul Foregoes Rights of Apostle (9:1-27)**
    - 3. Food Offered to Idols (continued; 10:1-11:1)
  - C. Matters related to Christian Worship (11:2-34)
  - D. Matters related to Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)
  - E. Matters related to the Resurrection (15:1-58)
  - F. Matters related to the Relief Offering (16:1-4)
- IV. Conclusion (16:5-24)

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<sup>1</sup> The complete outline is available on the Meadowlands Baptist Church website ([www.meadowlandsbaptist.ca](http://www.meadowlandsbaptist.ca)). Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 482–483.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Why does Paul contrast “love” and “knowledge” in 8:1?

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2. How should Christians evaluate idols, based on 8:4–5? How does this contrast with the nature of God (8:6)?

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3. According to the context, what causes “those who are weak” to stumble (8:9–10)? How should those with “knowledge” react to this possibility (8:11–13)?

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4. What evidences does Paul give for his apostleship in 9:1–2?

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5. What is the apostolic right that Paul defends in 9:3–14? How does Paul explain his choice to give it up in 9:15–18?

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6. What is the overriding purpose behind the various ways that Paul made himself “a servant to all” in 9:19–22?

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7. What character trait does Paul present in 9:24–25 as necessary for success in the Christian’s struggle with sin?

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

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9. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

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