

# “Nothing But The Blood”

I Corinthians 8: 1-13

([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=1+corinthians+8:1-13](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=1+corinthians+8:1-13))

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## God’s Grace TRUMPs knowledge and freedom!

Are you familiar with those card games that have trump cards? You are playing along with just the right winning strategy, then the person across from you pulls out a trump card, and just like that you lose! You were trumped!

As we consider the basics of the Christian faith, let me boldly proclaim that God’s grace trumps everything else! God’s grace defined as the unconditional, no strings attached love of God for each and every human being on earth. God’s grace trumps knowledge, personal freedom and even common sense! God’s grace is sufficient for any and all things in life! **(II Corinthians 12: 9)**. ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=11+corinthians+12:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=11+corinthians+12:9)) We can see the power of God’s grace at work in the Corinthian Church.

Trumping is what happened in this very strange conflict in the Corinthian church. There were two different views about eating meat that was offered to an idol. What was talked about in this passage is a cultic meal. The temples of the various idols located all around Corinth had cultic meals each day. People brought animals to be sacrificed on the temple’s altar. A portion of the animal sacrifice was burned on the altar. A portion of the sacrifice was saved for the cultic meal prepared and provided in the temple. And, a portion of the sacrifice was set aside on a table as the god’s meal.

In the Corinthian church there were new Christ followers who had believed all their life that eating meat offered as a sacrifice to idols was a way of participating in the life of that god. There were other more mature Christ followers who said that there were no gods other than the Triune God revealed by Jesus Christ. Therefore, they could feel free to eat at the inexpensive temple meals of idols because the god didn’t exist anyway. As with most church conflicts, there were people taking sides, talking about the other side, and self-righteously proclaiming their view to the right view.

- Some church members said they had a superior spiritual knowledge and they enjoyed looking down their noses at the weak and less intelligent members of the church.
- Some church members just talked and talked about both sides of the argument. They said they were praying, but they were really gossiping.
- Some church members were confused and losing heart over the conflict. They had found Christ in the church, but were now experiencing not peace, but conflict and they did not like it one bit.
- Some church members really believed that eating meat offered to idols opened up themselves and their church to a demonic influence.

What the Apostle Paul had in this young church was a royal mess. Paul knew what they needed! Each one of them needed a large dose of God’s grace

The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian Church to address this very local issue. The problem of eating meat offered to idols is no longer a burning issue. However, churches across America have burning issues that bring about conflict just as hot. So, the spiritual principles of God’s grace, Paul articulates, are universal no matter what the issue might be. Paul says in verses 1-3:

***Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge."  
Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.  
Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge;  
but anyone who loves God is known by him.***

What the Apostle Paul is saying to this very conflicted church is that God's grace, God's unconditional, no strings attached love, that Paul will define in chapter 13, trumps knowledge! You can have all the knowledge in the world, but if you do not have love, you are nothing! (**I Corinthians 13:2**) ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=1+corinthians+13:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=1+corinthians+13:2))  
In verses 12-13, The Apostle Paul details that second spiritual principle. God's grace trumps personal freedom!

***But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.***

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul reminds us that God's grace extended to us, is the very grace we are to extend to others. Forget what I want! Forget my right to do what I want! Forget what others might say I deserve! If my language, my actions, my personal agenda harms in any way one of the members of God's beloved community, then I am doing harm to Jesus Christ!

God's grace trumps knowledge! God's grace trumps personal freedom!

### **God's grace trumps common sense!**

I know that this statement really sounds far out. After all, we love our common sense. We talk about our leaders and wonder about their common sense! When the common sense rule is violated, then we become indignant and want to cast someone out of our presence.

How many of you would vote for a political leader who had spent at least two years in the recent past living among our enemies? Say, the person had lived among the Taliban for the years 2006-2008, and was now back in the U.S. and running for office. Would you vote for them?

How many of you would vote to impeach a person from high office who publically, in front of God and all the people shamelessly conducted an affair with a married woman?

How many of you would vote to impeach a person from high office who knowingly planned the execution of a high ranking member of the Army?

Now if you voted against the first person and voted to impeach the last two, you are in direct contradiction to God. Ouch! But, you say, it's just common sense to not want this kind of behavior in a leader. And, I will completely agree with you, but God does not! King David was all of the above and more and God loved him and continued to support him.

You have every right to ask, "What's up with this?" And, I will be the first to acknowledge that God is beyond me. The only way I can answer your question is that God's grace trumps even common sense at times. I really don't know what was going on, except that King David and God had a close relationship of grace, it was grace that allowed King David to pray to God in humility and seek forgiveness. And, God forgave and forgave and forgave!

Here just one of King David's prayers for God's forgiveness and grace. From **Psalms 51:1-11(NRSV)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+51:1-11](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+51:1-11))

***Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.***

*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in  
your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.  
Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.*

The humble, private relationship of King David and God provided a flowing of God's grace even after King David sinned mightily! And, if God continued to favor King David, who in the world can judge him?

**God's grace is sufficient! (II Corinthians 12:9)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=11+corinthians+12:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=11+corinthians+12:9))

Jesus said that with his coming the Kingdom of God is now present among us. **(Mark 1:15)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+1:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+1:15)) Another way of understanding Jesus' words is to say God's Beloved Community of grace is now available to us. Another way of understanding God's gift of grace is to use the language of King David in **Psalms 51** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+51](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+51)). We need to be washed whiter than snow! And, the only way we can be cleansed is through the shed blood of a grace-filled Savior. Friends, we live only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Living Savior. When God's grace flows, then we celebrate God's joy! When we stop up the flow of God's grace we stop the flow of the forgiving cleansing blood of Jesus Christ among us.

Kathy Polly sent me an email story that takes us back to the basics of God's grace!

One night in a church service a young woman felt the tug of God at her heart. She responded to God's call and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The young woman had a very rough past, involving alcohol, drugs, and prostitution. But, the change in her was evident. As time went on she became a faithful member of the church. She eventually became involved in teaching young children. It was not very long until this faithful young woman caught the eye and heart of the pastor's son. The relationship grew and they began to make wedding plans. This is when the problems began. You see, about one half of the church did not think that a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The church began to argue and fight about the matter. So they decided to have a meeting. As the people made their arguments and tensions increased the meeting was getting completely out of hand. The young woman became very upset about all the things being brought up about her past. As she began to cry the pastor's son stood to speak. He could not bear the pain it was causing his wife to be. He began to speak and his statement was this: 'My fiancée's past is not what is on trial here. What you are questioning is the ability of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. So, does it wash away sin or not?' The whole church began to weep as they realized that they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Too often, even as Christians, we bring up the past of others and use it as a weapon against our brothers and sisters in God's family. God's forgiveness and grace is the very foundational part of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the blood of Jesus does not cleanse the other person completely then it cannot cleanse us completely, if that is the case, then we are all in a lot of trouble. What can wash away our sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Once again I return to the basics for an individual or for a church. God's grace is sufficient! God's grace is enough! Open your heart and mind today and receive God's grace. Pray that this church will be overflowing with God's grace right now and in the future.