

## Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

### OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 18:15-20

**15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— 16 just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ 17 And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. 20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’**

**18:15-20** Deut 16:18–18:22 defines the offices of judge (16:18–17:13), king (17:14–20), priest (18:1–8), and prophet (18:9–22). The last section on prophesy describes the practices of the Canaanites that are “abominations” (vv 9, 12) because they are forms of magic. Two aspects of the Lord’s gift of a prophet in vv 15–22 stand out in this context. The first is the divine initiative over against the human initiatives cited in vv 10–11. The Lord promises, “I will raise up for them a prophet. . . . I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him” (v 18). The second contrast between the way of the Canaanites and the way of Israel is characteristic of the Book of Deuteronomy and its emphasis on the divine Word (vv 18–20). (CSB)

**18:15 prophet like me.** Verse 16, as well as the general context (see especially vv. 20–22), indicates that a series of prophets is meant. At Mount Horeb the people requested that Moses take the message from God and deliver it to them. But now that Moses is to leave them, he says that another spokesman will take his place, and then another will be necessary for the next generation. This is therefore a collective reference to the prophets who will follow. As such, it is also the basis for Messianic expectation and receives a unique fulfillment in Jesus (see Jn 1:21, 25, 45; 5:46; 6:14; 7:40; Ac 3:22–26; 7:37). (CSB)

Israel would have a succession of prophets resembling Moses in function, declaring the Word of Lord. *like me*. Moses here describes a prophet having a unique relationship with the Lord, one no other prophet enjoyed (34:10; Nu 12:6–8). Jewish commentators expected the coming of a new Moses. Luther: “This is the chief passage in this whole book and a clearly expressed prophecy of Christ as the new Teacher. Hence the apostles also courageously adduce this passage (Acts 3:22–23; 7:37)... Here Moses clearly describes his own end, and he yields his mastery to the Prophet who is to come.... Here he prophesies that Christ will be true man and will come from the blood of the Jews, because salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22). No one has ever arisen from this people who taught a different word from the word of Moses and set up a new ministry except this one Christ of ours” (AE 9:176, 180). (TLSB)

In this context, the prophet (*nabi*’) denotes both a single prophet as well as a line of prophets. The prophet will be “from your brothers,” in contrast to a Canaanite. Canaanites “listen” (*shama*’) to fortune-tellers (Deut 18:14), but the Lord commands Israel to “listen” (*shama*’) to his Word through the prophet. The contrast between the gods of the Canaanites and the Lord is between the visible and audible. Idols have form, but they do not speak (cf. Ps 115:5). The Lord has no form, but he decisively speaks. Idols are visible, but dumb. The Lord is invisible, but eloquent. Attempting to represent the Lord with a lifeless image would serve to gag him. Idolatry (as depicted in Deut 18:9–14) attempts to escape from the living voice of the living God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Moses described the coming prophet as one who would be “like me,” one who enjoyed a unique relationship with the Lord similar to that enjoyed by Moses. No other OT prophet spoke with the Lord the way Moses did. This prophet would be a fellow Israelite, who could trace his family tree back to one of the sons of Jacob. (PBC)

**18:16–18** Precedent for making prophecy the means for God’s communication with Israel (cf 5:22–29). Israel felt the fear of sinners faced by a perfect, holy God and His demands, so they asked Moses to be the one who met with God on their behalf and brought His Word to them. (TLSB)

**18:16-17** Moses was the mediator par excellence in the Old Testament (e.g., Ex 32:11–14; Deut 5:5). Other prophets also function in this role (e.g., Amos 7:1–6). Israel’s greatest prophetic intercessor and insister in the Bible is Jesus, who continually intercedes for sinners (Is 53:12; Lk 23:34; Rom 8:34). Climactically, Jesus not only prays for us, he steps into our place (2 Cor 5:21) and rises again for our vindication (Rom 4:25). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**18:16** See Ex 20:18–19; Heb 12:18–21. (CSB)

*let us not hear the voice of the Lord* – The fear Israel felt at Sinai is the kind of terror people will always feel when they are faced with God’s perfect demands and they must reckon with their own sin. We can’t comprehend how fully we’ve failed to do what God wants us to do until we have tried our hardest and still we’ve fallen short. After we try over and over to be good but fail every time, we finally arrive at the frightening moment when we turn to God and say, “If there is any hope for me at all, it has to come from you. I can’t do it!” (PBC)

**18:17** The Lord acknowledged the appropriateness of their request. (TLSB)

**18:18** *my words in his mouth.* See Ex 4:15–16. (CSB)

This emphasizes the authority of this coming prophet.

“I will put my words in his mouth.” Joshua is commanded to keep the Lord’s words in his mouth (Josh 1:8). The Lord places his word into the mouths of other prophets as well (e.g., Is 6:8; Jer 1:9; 15:16; Ezek 2:9–10; 3:1–2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The true prophet speaks only God’s Word (cf Jer 15:16; Ezk 2:9-3:3; 1 Pt 1:10-11; 2 Pt 1:19-21. Cyprian says, “Concerning (the prophet,) Christ says in the Gospel according to John: ‘Search the Scriptures, in which you think you have eternal life. These are they which testify concerning Me.... For if you had believed Moses, you would also believe Me.’” Chemnitz states, “When minds have in this way been prepared and crushed by the Law (v. 15), then God explains and repeats His promise about raising up another prophet and about another kind of teaching, namely the Gospel. (TLSB)

*all that I command* – This is wide variety of subjects: religion, domestic affairs, and foreign affairs. When the prophet speaks, the Lord speaks (Ex 4:15-16). (TLSB)

**18:19-20** False prophets are depicted in other texts, for example, Is 30:10–11; Jeremiah 27–28; Micah 2:11; 3:11. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**18:19** *I myself will require it of him* – This is a stern warning for any that do not listen to Jesus and his Word.

To obey the prophet's words was to obey the Lord's words. To ignore the prophet's word would lead to divine judgment. The Lord made no similar declaration about the orders of an Israelite king. (TLSB)

**18:20** *must be put to death.* See 13:5; Jer 28:15–17. (CSB)

Two types of prophecy are punishable by death: falsely attributing a prophecy to the Lord, and speaking in the name of other gods. (TLSB)

#### EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

**Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. 2 If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. 3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. 4 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.” 5 For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— 6 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. 7 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. 8 Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. 9 But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged,[d] if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? 11 And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. 12 Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.**

The worship of idols in temples in Corinth lay at the center of the lives of the people. And the food which they ate was intimately associated with this idol worship. Meat from animals without blemish was used in sacrifices to the idols. The worshippers could take some of the unused meat home for consumption there. Some of it was sold in the market. People who bought meat in the market could never be quite certain whether it had or had not been dedicated to idols. Furthermore, eating meat at the temples was very much a part of daily social life. It was somewhat like "eating out" in the USA. (Buls)

Paul had evidently discussed this entire matter with the Corinthian Christians. He had told them that the heathen gods and idols were only figments of the imagination. They do not even exist. Therefore, foods which had been dedicated to these idols and gods were not actually contaminated. (Buls)

After Paul left, several questions arose among the Corinthians. Evidently there were two erroneous opinions: (Buls)

1. Some felt that they had unbridled liberty with reference to eating meats;
2. Others felt that they had no liberty at all for such eating.

Paul is about to condemn both opinions. This chapter is exceedingly important in all generations. The problem of eating meats dedicated to idols is far removed from us. But we have problems very much like these which must be dealt with as Paul dealt with them. (Buls)

**8:1-10** Questions had arisen over whether Christians should eat food sacrificed to idols. This food was eaten in the temple dining room (8:7-13), at sacrifices involving actual idol worship (10:14-22), purchased in the marketplace (10:23-26), or eaten in an unbeliever's home (10:27-30). Some in Corinth argued that idols were not real gods, so the sacrifices did not matter and the food could be eaten. Paul agreed that the idols were not real (8:4-6; 10:26), but the decision of whether to eat the food was to be based on the way that other people interpreted that action (8:10; 10:29). Because some Corinthians had formerly worshiped these idols and eaten the meals as if the god were present, their perspective, shaped by these former associations, had to be taken into account. The Corinthians' behavior had to be faithful to God's commands and loving toward their fellow believers in Christ. The situation is different from Romans 14, where Paul instructs the Romans to stop passing judgment on one another in the matter of what foods to eat. In that context, eating or not eating was simply a matter of preference in a situation for which there is genuine Gospel freedom. (TLSB)

**8:1** *Now concerning food.* Another matter the Corinthians had written about (see note on 7:1). (CSB)

*offered to idols.* Offered on pagan altars. Meat left over from a sacrifice might be eaten by the priests, eaten by the offerer and his friends at a feast in the temple (see note on v. 10) or sold in the public meat market. Some Christians felt that if they ate such meat, they participated in pagan worship and thus compromised their testimony for Christ. Other Christians did not feel this way. (CSB)

The word *eidolothuton* means "what has been offered as a sacrifice to an idol." Various kinds of choice animals were offered to the gods. Part of the meat would be burned on the altar, and part of it would be used for a religious banquet, with the particular god as the honored guest. What was left would then be sold at the marketplace. It is especially this "leftover" meat sold at the marketplace to which Paul is referring, although in verse 10 he addresses people participating in the banquet meal as well. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

*knowledge.* Explained in vv. 2–6. (CSB)

Appealing to the slogan, "we all have knowledge," some of the Corinthians had taken a broad view of their entitlement to eat food that had been offered to idols. Apparently they felt they could eat such food with impunity on a variety of social occasions, and even recline at table in dining rooms such as those near the Lerna fountain, since (so they might argue) these had only a loose connection with the temple of Asklepios. Whether some also had the temerity to drink the cup (*κυκεών*) or eat from the dish (*κέρνος*) in the dining rooms on the lower terrace of Demeter's sanctuary is difficult to say. But the wording of 10:19–22 suggests that some may not have had scruples about going this far, reasoning that the *κυκεών* and *κέρνος* were not part of the cult that was practiced on the middle terrace. From their catechetical instruction the saints in Corinth had learned not to fear idols nor the so-called deities behind them. These entities had lost their reality. Thus the more sophisticated members of the congregation seem to have operated with a broad interpretation of the circumstances in which they thought they could eat idol-food. (CC)

*Knowledge puffs up.* It fills one with false pride. (CSB)

Only the person who holds it benefits. (TLSB)

In the face of this complacent attitude, Paul begins his pastoral response with this general truth: "knowledge puffs up" (8:1). The possession of a superior degree of religious knowledge did not guarantee that those who had it would take the right attitude toward the issue of idol-meat. For the acquisition of expertise—be it religious, philosophical, or whatever—tends to inflate a person with a sense of superiority over others. This boasting in self, then, rather than in the Lord (cf. 1:31) puts him at odds with

the Lord's purposes for his church. The Lord wants his church to be built up as a community, and that can only happen when its members display unselfish love for one another (cf. 10:23). This "love" is *not* "puffed up" (13:4). Such love will be patterned on "the example of Christ, who died for the weak ([8:]11), and also the example of Paul, who is willing to renounce all meat in order to keep his brothers and sisters from stumbling ([8:]13)." (CC)

This is evidently the second problem at Corinth concerning which they had written to Paul. Look at 7:1. "Now about" introduces what Paul had taught them. The words "all of us have knowledge" are put in quotation marks by RSV, TEV, and JB because the translators think that Paul is quoting from their letter. (Buls)

Grosheide: Knowledge in Paul's vocabulary is not something purely intellectual, it is a knowledge which has results and leads to action, especially religious action. . . . The Corinthians were convinced that they understood the problem except for a few minor details. (Buls)

But they were trying to determine everything by means of their intellect only. But Paul adds: "Knowledge puffs us." This is an axiom. Always mere intellectual knowledge leads to proud domination. When people compare themselves with others without loving them pride results. Look at 1 Corinthians 13:2. Paul adds: "But love builds up." Here look at 1 Corinthians 13:8. Love for the neighbor must always be the starting point. (Buls)

Morris: Pride so often accompanies knowledge, but it is the very antithesis of the genuine Christian spirit. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Many of the Corinthian Christians pretended to be so firmly grounded in head knowledge that they rose superior to all prejudices . . . Such an attitude is vain and sinful if it is not attended by the proper fruit of love in good works. (Buls)

Knowledge is necessary and good in itself but more than knowledge is needed. (Buls)

Paul immediately gets to the heart of the matter. Many of the Corinthians were all too conscious of their own knowledge as Christians, especially as it might pertain to the eating of idol meats. The Corinthians' knowledge had become the focus of attention, the beginning and end of the matter. Their knowledge was not turned outward in love, but inward in self-awareness and conceit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Phusioi – Paul used this verb to describe the arrogant, self-important Christians in Corinth who were dividing the church into factions and were ignoring the apostle's directives, even condoning the incestuous man (4:6, 18-19; 5:2). Paul probably has in mind Ha 2:4, which contrasts the unrighteous person as "puffed up" with the righteous person, who lives by faith. (CC)

*love builds up.* Explained in vv. 7–13. The Christian should love his brother who doubts. (CSB)

Love guides relationships between Christians (cf ch 13), promoting mutual care. (TLSB)

Knowledge is good, but knowledge as an end in itself serves no good purpose. Love must be added to knowledge so that it may be utilized rightly. Love edifies the church; it builds up, not in a hollow but in a substantive way. Love puts knowledge to its proper use – namely, to serve and help the neighbor. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

**8:2** *one imagines that he knows something* – Those who are wise and knowledgeable in their own eyes demonstrate, in fact, that they know very little. A Christian who is truly wise and knowledgeable will recognize that one's knowledge is very limited. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

The arrogant person (8:2), who is satisfied in his possession of a certain level of Christian knowledge, has not yet really comprehended the spirit of the Christian faith. This is evident in Hab 2:4, which contrasts the righteous person, who lives by faith, with the “puffed up” person, who presumes that his accomplishments and virtues have elevated his status before God. His thinking is according to Law, not the Gospel of undeserved grace. His understanding is still thoroughly self-centered (cf. Gal 6:3). He does not want to remain a listener and a learner but acts like a person who has arrived. He no longer looks forward as eagerly as the Christian should to heaven, when he will finally see “face to face” and know as he has been known (1 Cor 13:12). (CC)

Paul is here using “know” in the Scriptural sense. Compare Matthew 7:23 and John 10:14. It is a knowledge with affection and which is entirely for the other person. It has nothing to do with selfish “liking.” It denotes a lasting love, the true love of God which comes to us in the Gospel. Paul is here speaking about the person who is deceiving himself. “He has not yet come to know just as he ought to know.” (Buls)

Morris: Knowledge is proud that it has learnt so much. Wisdom is humble that it knows no more. (Buls)

A similar thought is found at Galatians 6:3. Paul is speaking about the proud self-deceiver whose knowledge lacks the most important ingredient. (Buls)

Psalm 111:10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.”

Romans 11:33-36 “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

*does not yet know.* The wisest and most knowledgeable Christian realizes that his knowledge is limited. God is the only one who knows all (cf. Ro 11:33–36). (CSB)

*ought to know* – Knowledge that does not result in love is self-delusional and false. (TLSB)

**8:3** *he is known by God.* A person who tempers his knowledge with love toward God shows that he is really known and thus accepted by God as one of God's own redeemed (Gal 4:8–9; 1Jn 4:7–8). (CSB)

Recognized and received by the Lord. Cf 13:12. (TLSB)

In contrast to the person who thinks he knows something, Paul sets the one who loves God (8:3). The logic of 8:3 is from evidence to inference. If someone loves God, it is because that person is known by God; God is the source of that person's love. Paul says something similar in Gal 4:9: “Now knowing God—or rather being known by God ...” God's knowledge and election of a person come first and enable a person to then know and love God. While a person may think that he has learned about God and has chosen to believe in and love God, it actually was God's prior action of knowing him and revealing himself that results in the person knowing and loving God. (CC)

Such a person has been freed from self-centered pride in himself and what he knows. He no longer lives for himself, but for God, who has granted him salvation in Christ. And in loving God, he will begin to love and build up God's people. When a person's focus is thus on God and others, he will no longer rejoice in his own knowledge but in God's gracious knowledge of him (cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Gal 4:9). His life will be characterized by humble gratitude (cf. 1 Cor 4:7). (CC)

We would have expected Paul to say: "But if anyone loves God, this one has knowledge." But love does not start with a person. It begins and is constantly coming from God. "This one is known by Him." (Buls)

Franzmann: Real 'knowledge' is not an attainment of man but God's gift to man, not so much a knowing as a being known, that is, being loved, chosen, and called by God. (Buls)

Look at 2 Timothy 2:19; Galatians 4:9; Romans 8:28-29. (Buls)

Grosheide: The real difference is ultimately one of one's relationship to God . . . It is Paul's purpose to inform the Corinthians of the great significance of God's love which surpasses all earthly knowledge. (Buls)

Kretzmann: If the faith of a Christian has found its proper expression in love toward his neighbor, 1 John 5:2, then he also knows that his knowledge of love is the result of God's having known him. If God knows any one in this way, it is an effective knowledge, Galatians 4:9; Romans 8:29; it brings him into the most intimate relation of mind and spirit. (Buls)

egnostai is a perfect indicative passive: "has come to be known and is still known" by God. Therefore, God's knowing a person is the cause for the person's loving, and not the other way around. Those who love God demonstrate that they have first been known and saved by God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

**8:4** 1 Cor 8:1–3 laid the foundation for Paul's response to the question about idol-food. "Knowledge" and "love" (8:1) are the key terms. On the one hand, Paul concedes: "Yes, you and I know about idol-foods. We know that they are just food." On the other hand, Paul reminds the Corinthians that a self-centered knowledge without love has no value and does not build up the church (13:2). God's loving choice rests on the person who loves him and loves his neighbor. (CC)

*we know* – Both the apostle and those who eat idol food in Corinth share a basic knowledge about God and about idolatry. (TLSB)

*an idol has no real existence.* It represents no real god and possesses no power (see Ps 115:4–7; 135:15–17; Isa 44:12–20). But there are demons behind them (10:20). (CSB)

There is only one God; all other "so-called gods" (v 5) are mere human creations. Cf Romans 1:22-23. Some Corinthians took this "knowledge" and decided that they could eat any food that had been sacrificed to the idols because the idols were not real. (TLSB)

What implications, then, must be drawn regarding the eating of idol-food? On the face of it, from the standpoint of Christian *knowledge* there should not be a problem. Again Paul concedes that the Corinthians' slogans are true: "there is no idol in the world" and "there is no God but one" (8:4). After all, the first slogan was thoroughly consistent with the prophets and psalmists who mocked the lifeless idols of the heathen (e.g., Ps 115:3–8; Is 44:9–20). And the second slogan echoed Israel's foundational creed, the *Shema* of Deut 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one!" This creed was recited by

the faithful Israelite every morning and afternoon. It also formed a key element in synagogue worship. It was, above all, this clear monotheistic affirmation that distinguished the Jewish people from the polytheistic cultures surrounding them. Paul here agrees with the testimony of the “wise” in Corinth to the continuity between Israel’s ancient faith in the one true God and the monotheistic position of Christianity. (CC)

In verses 4-6 Paul speaks of knowledge of idols and knowledge of God. "So then," takes us back to verse 1. Note the similarity of words. Paul again says "about." Many are of the opinion that also in this verse Paul is quoting from the Corinthians' letter. RSV indicates that idea: "We know that 'an idol has no real existence,' and that 'there is no God but one.'" (Buls)

There is only one true God. All pagan gods and idols are non-existent. "World" is used in the sense of the worldly world. The latter part of this verse reminds us of Deuteronomy 6:4. (Buls)

Morris: Paul is prepared to agree with his correspondents that the gods the heathen worship are no gods. (Buls)

Kretzmann: All the strange gods which were described in the hymns of the day were not realities, but were nothing. (Buls)

Grosheide: There is no reason to abstain from sacrificial meat for there is but one God, our God whom we adore. (Buls)

Part of the knowledge the Corinthians had was that idols represent no real gods and have no real power. Thus sacrifices offered to idols are offered to nothing, and the meat is not defiled. However, Paul’s comments here should be taken along with his later comments that there are demonic forces behind the worship of idols. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

**8:5** *so-called gods*. The alleged gods of Greek and Roman mythology. (CSB)

Paul continues to express his agreement with what the Corinthians had learned as part of their basic Christian knowledge. Israel’s faith as expressed in the *Shema* governed its attitude to the various gods and goddesses worshiped by neighboring peoples. Although Paul and the Corinthians knew that there were many of these—some with their primary abode in heaven, the usual dwelling place of the gods, others with their residence on earth—they were agreed that they were all merely “so-called ‘gods’ ” (8:5); they had no real existence and no real power. (CC)

“Yes,” Paul continues, “I acknowledge that there are many of these so-called ‘gods’ and ‘lords.’ ” The term “lords” may include both the “lords” worshiped in the mystery cults and departed emperors who were worshiped as “lord and god.” But the title was also given to the regular gods and goddesses like Isis and Serapis. (CC)

*many “gods” and many “lords.”* Not that there actually are many gods and lords. This would contradict the consistent and emphatic teaching of Scripture that there is but one God (Dt 6:4). Paul is recognizing the obvious fact that there are many who are worshiped as gods—though they do not actually exist, to say nothing of being deities. (CSB)

But no matter how dazzling was the array of so-called “gods” and “lords” offering themselves for allegiance, as far as Paul and the Corinthians are concerned (“for us”) there is only “one God, the Father” (8:6; cf. “one Father ... one God,” Mal 2:10). This one God is no local deity with a circumscribed

residence either in heaven or on earth. Rather, he is the almighty Creator and source of “all things” (1 Cor 8:6; cf. Gen 14:19, 22; Jonah 1:9). He is also “the Father” of the “one Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 8:6) and of those who believe in Jesus. Christians live for their heavenly Father (“and we [are] *for* him,” 8:6). In everything they are oriented toward him and strive to please him. (CC)

"For even if" is used to elucidate verse 4. Some are of the opinion that Paul is again quoting snatches from the Corinthians' letter. "For even if" is "although" and is concessive. Note the repetition of "many" in the second part of verse 5. Paul is probably not making a distinction between "gods" and "worlds." He is simply using the high-sounding vocabulary of the heathen but it amounts to absolutely nothing. JB makes verse 5 a contrary-to-fact condition to bring out the point that these so-called gods and lords are non-existent. The heathen had images on earth for their imagined gods which filled heaven and earth but it all amounted to nothing. (Buls)

Thus far the vain imaginings of the pagans. Verse 6 begins with "yet" a strong adversative conjunction. "For us" means "for us Christians." (Buls)

Note that the 26th edition of Nestle Greek text prints verse 6 as a liturgical formula. Perhaps it was a formula used in their divine services. This theory is not harmful so long as it is not used in the interest of form criticism or its equivalent. Note how lines 1-2 correspond to lines 3-4. Lines 1 and 3 speak about the Father and the Son. Lines 2 and 4 speak about their activities and what they mean for Christians. (Buls)

**8:6** *one Lord* – This common early Christian expression focused on the Father and the Son (cf. Php 2:6-11). (TLSB)

The Christian also knows only “one Lord Jesus Christ” (8:6; cf. Eph 4:5; 1 Tim 2:5). Echoing the church’s confession, Paul makes bold to identify the “one Lord” of Israel’s *Shema* with the Lord Jesus. He senses no dissonance in attaching this affirmation to his declaration that there is only “one God,” for he clearly regards the Father and the Son as distinct persons within the one Godhead. The Son is the eternal Word of God, affirmed also in Jn 1:3 and Heb 1:2 to be the agent through whom the Father made the whole created order (1 Cor 8:6). The believer knows that it is through Christ that he has both his physical and his spiritual existence. (CC)

Note the prominence of "one God." There is only one. In apposition to this is "the Father." No other religion than the one true one calls God "Father," as Christians know Him, the Father of Jesus and the Father of all believers. (Buls)

The universe is "from Him." And we Christians are *to* Him, wholly devoted to Him, not to any idol or false god. (Buls)

Now the second line. Just as God is "one" so our Lord, Jesus Christ, is "one." No polytheism here. All things are "through" Him. He is the Creator. Look at Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11; Hebrews 1:3. In addition, He is our Savior and our Mediator. Ephesians 2:18; Romans 8:29. (Buls)

Lenski: One God and One Lord excludes all pagan notions about gods as such for the Christian consciousness. (Buls)

For the final phrase Morris notes 2 Corinthians 5:17. In four beautiful symmetrical lines Paul briefly describes the person and work of the One Father and the One Lord which work is devoted to mankind and therefore believers live entirely to this One God. It is no wonder that modern scholars consider these lines

to be of a liturgical nature. But at the same time we believe that they were composed by Paul himself. (Buls)

*from whom all things came ... through whom we exist.* See Heb 2:10. God the Father is the ultimate source of all creation (Ac 4:24). God the Son is the dynamic one through whom, with the Father, all things came into existence (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16). (CSB)

The Son was active in the creation of life and in the new creation of faith (2Co 5:17). (TLSB)

The classic way of stating our relation to the Trinity is this: Our life and salvation come to us from the Father through the Son in the Spirit (that is, in the Spirit-bestowed Word and sacraments), and we worship and live in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. The triune God is a dynamic reality; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – one God in three persons – are together our very life. The love of God flows out to us, embraces us, and draws us into himself. Living in him, we live in love for one another. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

**8:7** *not all possess this knowledge*<sup>7</sup>. Knows that an idol has no personal reality. (CSB)

True faith in the Christian confession will always be active in love (Gal 5:6). Paul has established that he is at one with the more “enlightened” members of the church in the confidence and *knowledge* that idols represent gods that really do not exist, and the foods offered to them are just ordinary foods (8:4–6). But knowledge of the essentials of the faith merely puffs up if it is not applied in Christian *love*. And Paul’s loving pastoral concern for the whole congregation has made him aware that some of the Corinthians are not yet free from the emotional pull of their former attachment to idols. As soon as they give in to pressure from friends and join them for a meal in an idol’s temple, the old associations begin to reassert themselves. They find they are not able to regard the meat simply as a gift from the Creator. The meat has been offered to idols. So their conscience is defiled; they eat and go home feeling guilty because they have participated, at least outwardly, in a ritual of worship of a false god (cf. Rom 14:23). (CC)

"But" is a strong "however." Paul is about to set them straight as to what is causing the trouble. "Not in all" means that some had not the knowledge necessary. The article "this" points us back to the knowledge of verse 1. The cause is brought out in the remainder of this verse. A minority need their help. AAT translates: "But not everybody knows this. Some are still so used to an idol they think of the meat they eat as sacrificed to the idol." Though they know that the idol is nothing, they still cling to the notion that the meat is sacrificed to something that is real. They were confused. And so, because their conscience is weak, it is defiled. They were not convinced that eating this meat was a matter of indifference. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Some of them could not get rid of the notion that there was something real about the idol . . . The idea that the idol was, after all, a real being gave them a bad conscience, and for that reason their eating, though in itself not wrong, became sinful. (Buls)

Grosheide: When he eats such meat it still is sacrificial meat to him and puts him in touch with the idols. (Buls)

Lenski: Their Christian knowledge regarding idols does not rid them of the consciousness that what they thus eat is sacrificial idol-meat . . . A weak conscience is one that is not fully clear as to whether an act is right or wrong. (Buls)

Many Corinthians were adult converts who would have previously taken part in pagan idol worship. Viewing idols as real, with distinctive powers, they think of the meat which was sacrificed as being

somehow “unholy.” Thus, when they eat of it, their weak conscience is defiled. They think of themselves as having been made impure; or they are burdened with guilt because they think they are sinning against God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

*their conscience being weak, is defiled.* Christians who conceive of an idol as being real cannot rid themselves of this idea. Consequently, they think that in eating meat sacrificed on pagan altars they have involved themselves in pagan worship and thus have sinned against Christ. (CSB)

Because their moral outlook is not yet firmly grounded in a Christian perspective, they have a “weak” perspective on idols; they recall worshiping these very gods. When they see someone eating idol sacrifices, they think such people are worshiping the idol to whom it was sacrificed. (TLSB)

Preserving a good conscience is part of a Christian’s high responsibility. Paul testified before the Sanhedrin and the Roman authorities that he had always maintained a good conscience before God and other people (Acts 23:1; 24:16). He wrote to Timothy: “The aim of our charge is love that springs from a clean heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” (1 Tim 1:5; cf. 1 Tim 1:19; 3:9; Titus 1:15). Not only should each Christian strive to live before God and his neighbor with a good conscience, but he should also try to keep others in the congregation from the burden of a stained conscience. This is part of what it means to live as sanctified people (1 Cor 1:2). (CC)

*is defiled* – They were led to sin because they think they are worshiping an idol. (TLSB)

The Corinthian situation may be compared with the mission field, where new converts often find it difficult to rid themselves entirely of their old fears of witchcraft and ancestral spirits. In countries like Papua New Guinea, the earliest converts often resisted suggestions from missionaries that they use traditional musical instruments like the kundu drum in their worship services. They explained that they could not hear these instruments without hearing the voice of the spirits. Later generations of Christians who never participated in the pagan practices were able to incorporate the drum in worship. (CC)

**8:8** *not commend us* – Paristami means “to present to someone for acceptance; to give as an offering, dedicate.” Food does not commend us to God. The eating of various foods, including those offered to idols, falls in the area of Christian freedom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Many commentators think 8:8a (“food will not present us to God”) is another quotation from the Corinthians’ prior letter to Paul. By this slogan some Christians justified their attendance at meals in the heathen temples. What we eat or drink, they contended, was not something God took into account in deciding who should be ushered into his presence. (CC)

Whether the words are a quotation or not, they were in accord with Paul’s position. He taught that “the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). His attitude to rules about food and drink was similar to his stance on circumcision: for those in Christ Jesus it had become a matter of no importance. What really counted was “faith active in love” (Gal 5:6; cf. 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 6:15). (CC)

Matthew 15:11 “What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’”

*no worse...no better* – It is not necessarily wrong to eat the food sacrificed to idols, but eating it is not beneficial because it leads away from God and harms the neighbor. “The Gospel does not advise about distinguishing clothing and meats and giving up of property” (Ap. XXVII 26). (TLSB)

"But" introduces Paul's exposition of the matter. "Food" covers all foods. Grosheide thinks that again Paul is quoting from the Corinthians' letter. None of our versions indicate that. Likely Paul is *not* quoting their letter. "No worse -- no better" are correlative adverbs of negation. Each is followed by a present general condition which holds true at all times. It is the axiomatic condition. If we *don't* eat we are not worse off. If we *do* eat we are not better off. Apparently, Paul is criticizing both groups. The minority felt that eating meat sacrificed to idols was sinful. The majority felt that eating such meat showed their strength of faith. Both were wrong. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The food that we eat cannot influence our spiritual life . . . These external matters do not affect our standing with God. (Buls)

Grosheide: If food does not bring us nearer to God, it is of no importance for our relation to God whether we eat or not. (Buls)

Lenski: Paul's exposition . . . has a double purpose in mind: first, to assist those having a weak conscience who eat idol-meat only with compunction; secondly, to correct those having a strong conscience who eat without compunction and who are proud of doing so. Food has no power to determine our relation to God one way or another. (Buls)

The *Apology* states concerning this verse:

It is false that monastic observances are the works of the counsels of the Gospel. For the Gospel does not counsel distinctions among clothes or foods, not the surrender of property. These are human traditions, about all of which it has been said in 1 Corinthians 8:8 'Food does not commend us to God.' (Buls)

**8:9** *this right of yours*. To eat meat sacrificed to idols because you know that an idol is nothing (v. 4). (CSB)

The conclusion of the "strong" is correct: there is no other god, so what is sacrificed to an idol is nothing (cf 10:19, 26). (TLSB)

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (LW 31:344) Though these two statements seem to be contradictory, they are in fact a scriptural depiction of one who is in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

"We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise, he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor. (LW 31:371) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

1 Corinthians 9:19 "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."

Romans 13:8 "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law."

*the weak*. Those Christians whose consciences are weak, who think it is wrong to eat meat sacrificed to idols. (CSB)

So if a Christian felt he must refrain from idol-food, Paul assured him he was at no disadvantage; he was not missing out on anything. By the same token, the Christian who participated in these meals should not think he was in any way superior. (CC)

The guiding principle is to be Christian love, which “builds up.” Knowledge on the other hand, can puff up those who think they possess it (8:1). The apostle warns the Corinthians not to let their authority (ἐξουσία, 8:9) as liberated Christian people go to their heads (cf. the slogan “all things are permissible” in 6:12; 10:23). They had become “puffed up” (4:19; 5:2) and arrogant in their newfound knowledge, as if in their sovereign freedom they could do anything they pleased. Paul wryly remarks that they had better watch that “this authority of yours doesn’t become a stumbling block to the weak” (8:9), leading them into grave spiritual danger (8:10–13). True spiritual knowledge should always result in love for the Christian brother (Gal 5:13), especially the weak. (CC)

How often does not Scripture say "Beware!" This is a stern warning. "This right of yours might become a cause of sin for the weak." How terrible! AAT translates: "But be careful, or weak Christians may fall into sin because you do as you please." (Buls)

Paul does not say that it will be so in every case. He guards himself with "perhaps." But the danger is there. (Buls)

Lenski: Not our 'knowledge' but our 'love' for the weak must govern our action. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Paul rebukes the attitude of the stronger Christians with a very serious reference to the consequences of their uncharitable behavior. This right ceased to be a matter of Christian liberty when indulging in it proved an obstacle to their weak brother. (Buls)

Grosheide: This right cannot be the rule for a person's conduct. The eating of sacrificial meat in itself is no sin, but it may lead to sin if the weaker brethren eat it in a certain way. Love for the brethren requires that we reckon with the difficulties of the weak, look at verses 11-13; Romans 14:13; Galatians 5:13. . . . Paul's arguments are valid for every kind of eating and the eating of sacrificial meat is only a specific case. (Buls)

Morris: The Corinthians claimed the 'right' to do as they pleased in the matter of idols. Paul reminds them that no Christian is at liberty to assert his 'rights' if that means doing harm to other people, a principle of wide application. 'Stumbling block' is a stone in the pathway, an obstacle, something that trips one up and makes progress difficult. The actions of the strong must not be such as to afford a hindrance to the progress of the weak. What is right for one man may well be wrong for another. No one should try to force his standards of right and wrong on to others, whose conscience reacts differently. (Buls)

Eating this food, even though it is morally defensible, may lead others to sin (v. 7). (TLSB)

**8:10** *eating in an idol's temple*. At the site of ancient Corinth, archaeologists have discovered two temples containing rooms apparently used for pagan feasts where meat offered to idols was eaten. To such feasts Christians may have been invited by pagan friends. (CSB)

A different situation from that in 10:14-22, where idol rituals were involved. Many Greco-Roman temples had what we would consider dining or banqueting facilities. Meals were commonly eaten there, particularly for business or social functions such as birthday or wedding celebrations. (TLSB)

Paul now spells out his specific concern. Although many pagan Greeks and Romans no longer ascribed any significance to the old myths and deities, they continued to frequent the temples for social reasons. Once they became Christians, it was easy to rationalize that, after all, no divinities really inhabited these temples, the idols on show there were merely wood and stone, and the sacrificial food was merely food, a part of God's creation. Thus (they would argue) they could continue to accept invitations to dine in these sanctuaries, even in the more overtly idolatrous context of the dining rooms of Demeter's sanctuary,<sup>11</sup> thereby avoiding a painful breach with friends from their pagan past. (CC)

Now we have an example. "You who have this knowledge" denotes one who has knowledge, who has Christian liberty, but who does not begin with love for the neighbor. Here Paul is using the form of "in a temple" very ironically. Evidently people often received invitations to have dinner in temples. Paul imagines a case in which the person with knowledge purposely eats there to assert his liberty and right. But when the weak person sees what this strong person is doing, he too goes there to eat but the result is horrible. He conscience is emboldened, in spite of itself and thus he sins. (Buls)

Morris: Evidently the strong among the Corinthians had spoken of the necessity of 'building up' the weak by encouraging them to do such actions. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The stronger brethren freely accepted invitations to banquets in the temples of heathen gods. They probably had the idea that this was the most effective way of persuading the weak of their foolish position. But what was a questionable edification and could result in only one thing, namely in harm to the weak . . . The latter would also accept such invitations, with the result that their consciences would be defiled. The behavior of the strong was thus the very opposite of charitableness, it was selfish presumption. (Buls)

Knowledge is good and necessary. But if it is without true love we have demolition rather than edification. (Buls)

**8:11** Because the new believer is led to worship what had formerly been considered a real god, the person breaks the First Commandment and is in danger of losing faith. (TLSB)

your knowledge...*this weak brother ... is destroyed*. The weak Christian is influenced by the example of the stronger Christian and, though he feels it to be wrong, eats the meat that has been offered to an idol. The spiritual destruction that follows is explained in v. 12. (CSB)

While the self-confident Christian blithely goes ahead and parades his Christian "knowledge" and "freedom," he seems to be either unaware or completely careless of the effect his behavior is having on his weaker brother. Placing the verb ἀπόλλυται ("is being destroyed") first in 8:11 for emphasis, Paul brings it home to every Christian that in allowing himself to become puffed up with his knowledge, he has become *personally* responsible (the apostle's pastoral use of the pronoun "you" in 8:10, and the possessive adjective "your" in "your knowledge" in 8:11) for jeopardizing his brother's salvation. This brother is being ruined spiritually (8:11; cf. 1:18; 10:9–10; 15:18). Four times in the last three verses of the chapter Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians that the weak Christian is their brother. (CC)

Robertson and Plummer have pointed out that "the last clause [of 8:11] could hardly be more forcible in its appeal; every word tells; 'the brother,' not a mere stranger; 'for the sake of whom,' precisely to rescue him from destruction; 'Christ,' no less than He; 'died,' no less than that." Paul's argument here, as throughout the final verses of the chapter, closely parallels his longer discourse on the relationship between Christians in Romans 14. There his concern is twofold: that the weak should not judge the strong, and the strong should not despise the weak. Here his pastoral rebuke is directed only at the

arrogance of those who sin against the “weak” and thereby sin against Christ (8:12). Just as Paul lived “by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20), so according to his Gospel the Son of God had died for all, even the most fragile and despised. As Isaiah foretold about him: “A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not snuff out” (Is 42:3). (CC)

### **Pastoral Implications for Today**

At first sight, the issue of idol-foods may seem to have little relevance today, since the eating of meat sacrificed to an idol is no longer an issue in Western Christianity. However, the principle of brotherly love which Paul enunciates does have broad application: “If food causes my brother to fall, I will never eat meat to eternity, lest I cause my brother to fall” (1 Cor 8:13). It is never appropriate to flaunt one’s “Christian freedom” and thereby lead a vulnerable brother to do something against his conscience. To do so is to sin against Christ himself (8:12). In this connection, Paul may have remembered the Lord’s words to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?” (Acts 9:4). Paul said to the Galatians: “You received me like an angel of God, like Christ Jesus” (Gal 4:14). That is true of all Christians, not just apostles; to receive or aid a Christian is to serve Christ himself (Mt 25:35–40). (CC)

Therefore, Paul says, to sin against a weak brother is to sin against Christ himself (1 Cor 8:12). This will be true also regarding the Corinthians’ abuses of the Lord’s Supper. Because the body and blood of Christ are present with the bread and wine, the person who partakes unworthily sins against the Lord’s body and blood (11:27–32). Such sins bring God’s judgment (11:29–30). This requires the church, especially the pastor, to exercise discretion in the practice of Holy Communion. (CC)

Moreover, while idol-meat has ceased to be an issue in the West, close parallels to the situation in Corinth may be found in countries newly opened up to Christianity, where the eating of food offered to ancestral spirits and the pouring of libations to invoke and appease them (not to mention other occult practices) are still live issues. And in the West, comparable situations often arise. Many western Christians have been tempted to associate with pagan cults or to dabble in the occult (séances, Ouija boards, palmistry, astrology). Many more have been led astray by the multifaceted demonic temptations of a secular culture, for example, by certain forms of music and entertainment, or participation in certain clubs and fraternal orders like the Masons. Especially pervasive is what has been aptly called “the idolatry of materialism.” In its broadest sense, idolatry includes every activity and thing in which people revel apart from God and his good gifts. As Luther said, “Idolatry does not consist merely of erecting an image and praying to it. It is primarily in the heart, which pursues other things and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils.” (CC)

The Christian faith, on the other hand, is opposed to all forms of idolatry and syncretism (cf. 1 Jn 5:20–21). Just as the OT prophets condemned Baal worship as incompatible with the biblical faith, so Paul would ask the Corinthians: “What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor 6:15–16 NKJV). Thus Christians may not enter into syncretistic associations with pagan cults. (CC)

Fee broadens our understanding of the pastoral implications of 1 Cor 8:7–13 today:

Those who have been involved in the rescue of drug addicts and prostitutes, e.g., or of people involved in various expressions of voodoo and spirit worship, have an existential understanding of this text that others can scarcely appreciate. Many such people must be forever removed from their former associations, including returning to their former haunts for evangelism [evangelizing others still trapped in those sins], because the grip of their former life is so tenacious. Paul took the power of the demonic seriously; hence his concern that a former idolater, by returning to his

or her idolatries, will be destroyed—that is, he or she will return to former ways and be captured by them all the more, and thus eventually suffer eternal loss. (CC)

Paul’s concern that the brother not be destroyed may be applied even more broadly in areas of Christian ethics. How many Christians from cultures lacking a tradition of moderate drinking or how many recovered alcoholics or alcoholics’ children have not been gravely offended by the flaunting of alcohol common in some Christian circles? Incitement to a gambling fling, or to other activities over which some Christians have scruples, or for which they have a weakness, also falls under the apostle’s condemnation. It is one thing to thumb one’s nose at pharisaical Christians; it is quite another thing when one’s “Christian freedom” becomes the occasion of another’s spiritual ruin. (CC)

Paul impresses on the Corinthian Christians that their conduct in the temples is not a sign of superior knowledge, nor the mark of free people; it is simply sinful. The verb “to sin” is placed emphatically both near the beginning and at the end of the Greek of 1 Cor 8:12. Far from helping and strengthening those with weak consciences, their brothers are hitting them when they are down. The verb *τύπτω* (“to strike, beat”) in 8:12 is normally used in the NT for a physical blow (e.g., Acts 23:2). But here Paul uses it of a blow to a person’s spirit. “What requires the tenderest handling is brutally treated, so that its sensibility is numbed.” (CC)

Verse 10 is a rhetorical question. Paul does not answer it. (Buls)

Lenski: Better than a formal answer is the terrific blow which Paul drives home. (Buls)

The sense of "is destroyed" is that he is perishing right now already. And it is because of "your superior knowledge." Though weak he is still called "brother." Christ loved the weak and died for him. The "superior" brother destroys him. (Buls)

Robertson-Plummer: The last clause could hardly be more forcible in its appeal; every word tells; 'the brother' not a mere stranger; 'for the sake of whom,' precisely to rescue him from destruction; 'Christ' no less than He; 'died' no less than that. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The very object of Christ's death in the case of the weaker brother is frustrated by such thoughtless behavior. (Buls)

Lenski: Two mighty obligations converge, the one toward the brother and the other toward Christ . . . Christ died to save your brother -- to this extent Christ loved him; by your selfish knowledge and proud power you help to destroy your brother -- that is the extent to which YOU love him. (Buls)

The verb *apollumi* in the middle voice means “to come to ruin, to be destroyed, to perish, to lose salvation.” Many Christians in Paul’s day would likely have been invited by their pagan friends to the temple banquets. Some believers with a weak conscience would feel compelled to go if other “stronger” Christians also were going or had gone previously. In this way they would be influenced to sin against their conscience and stumble in their faith. Thus the knowledge of which some of the Corinthian Christians were so proud would end up being the cause of sin and the destruction of a fellow believer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

**8:12** *wounding their conscience when is weak.* Eating meat offered to idols when they feel it is wrong tends to blunt their consciences, so that doing what is wrong becomes much easier. The result may be moral tragedy. (CSB)

But Paul's question takes up the effect of this libertine attitude on the weaker brother. Far from being a support to the brother who still struggles with his conscience, far from building him up in the faith, "you" (8:12; the use of the second person is pointed; also "your," 8:11–12), by this public display of your rights and "Christian freedom," are only fortifying him to act against his conscience. To you, perhaps, the food is merely food, but to your brother it is still idol-food; he cannot rid his conscience of the thought that this food has been sacrificed to an idol. 1 Cor 8:10–13 is a stern condemnation of the loveless behavior of those who claimed to have superior knowledge. (CC)

*you sin against Christ.* Because Christ died for your brother (v. 11), even as he died for you. It is also a sin against Christ because it breaks the unity of the members of his body (the church). (CSB)

By nullifying Christ's saving work in the new believer, the strong destroy the person's faith and sin against Christ. (TLSB)

In sinning against the least of Jesus' brothers, a Christian is sinning against Christ himself (1 Cor 8:12). For even the least important members of the church are temples of the Holy Spirit (3:16–17; 6:19) and vital parts of the body of Christ. (CC)

In 1 Cor 8:13 Paul draws the conclusion to the first part of his argument concerning idol-meat. With a strong "therefore" (8:13), he informs the complacent Christians of the lengths to which he is prepared to go for the sake of his *brother*. If he became aware that something as peripheral to Christ's kingdom as food (βρῶμα, "food," is placed forward for emphasis) was ruining his brother, he would become a vegetarian for eternity. Twice in 8:13 Paul calls the "weak" Christian "*my brother*." Without question, his brother's eternal welfare is far more important than food. Paul's pastoral concern for the weak "reminds us of Jesus' care for the little ones." (CC)

"In this way" means "by not loving the weak brother for whom Christ died." (Buls)

Grosheide: It is the sin of wounding the conscience of believers, for this conscience is thus driven in a direction where the weak brother would not have gone of his own and where he is not permitted to go. (Buls)

Kretzmann: So it is not only the weak brother that sins but the stronger Christian that tempted him sins as well. And his is the greater damnation.

Morris: They are 'in Christ,' and anything done against them is accordingly done against Him. (Buls)

**8:13** *therefore* – dioper is even stronger than "therefore," more like "for this very reason." To paraphrase Paul in this verse, So important is another's faith and spiritual life that I'll never eat meat again if that's what it takes to keep that person from falling. Paul's clear admonition, then, for the sake of weaker believers, is that the Corinthians should not eat food that is known to have been sacrificed to idols. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

"Therefore" draws a conclusion to the entire chapter. We have a fact condition which is assumed to be true. Paul begins with "food" and then switches to "flesh." (Buls)

Kretzmann: He will give up even other foods about which another may still be in doubt, not only the food offered to sacrifices. (Buls)

Lenski: We who are strong in knowledge must be equally strong in love. Knowledge alone is nothing, knowledge combined with love is everything. (Buls)

Arrogance smells. Love edifies. A fitting observation by Morris in conclusion: (Buls)

Morris: The principle laid down in this chapter is one of great practical importance. It is always easy for the strong Christian to see no harm whatever in actions which would be sin if performed by the weak. (Buls)

*I will never eat meat again.* Paul will forever refrain from engaging in the harmless practice of eating meat sacrificed to idols if it will cause his weak Christian brother, who feels it is wrong, also to eat that meat. (CSB)

What might lead another to sin and unbelief is avoided in that person's presence. Paul took a different attitude toward those who demanded certain practices as a basis of righteousness (cf Gal 3:10). (TLSB)

**Ch 8** The rights and the freedom of the Gospel are wrongly promoted in the Corinthian Church, leading the believers to adopt too easily the behaviors and practices of the surrounding culture. No believer has the right or freedom to destroy the faith of others, especially those whom Paul describes as weak in the faith. Faith is not a private matter. Faithful Christians will be zealous to pray for and carry out God's will that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1Tm 2:3–4). How marvelously our Savior bears with our weaknesses! Most important, He took away our sin and builds us up in love. • From selfishly seeking our own rights at the expense of others, deliver us, O Lord. From unwittingly leading Your chosen saints into sin, deliver us, O Lord. Stir us up to worship and honor You alone, and through Your Spirit use us to turn others to You. Amen. (TLSB)

#### GOSPEL – Mark 1:21-28

**21 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. 22 And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. 23 And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” 26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. 27 And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” 28 And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.**

**1:21-28** In the original Greek, the verbs in v 21 do not have subjects. The subject is Jesus and the four disciples mentioned in vv 16–20. This omission connects our text with the preceding context. In the RSV and NKJV the word “immediately” prefaces the action of Jesus in v 21, echoing the immediacy of the kingdom of God as described in v 15. Verse 29 also connects our text with the following context. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The connection between text *and* context is subtle. Jesus encounters demons throughout the entire first chapter of Mark. Verse 13 calls brief attention to Jesus' temptation in the desert by Satan, the prince of darkness. In our text Jesus does battle with one of Satan's subordinates. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Finally, vv 34 and 39 remind us that Jesus “drove out many demons.” Even more specific is the connection between the refusal of Jesus to accept the testimony of demons in v 34 and his stern reaction to the testimony of the evil spirit in vv 24 and 25 of our text. Modern readers may be surprised at the frequency of the miracle of casting out demons in our Lord’s ministry. Its frequency is understandable once we grasp the purpose of Jesus’ mission on earth. He came to battle Satan and the powers of darkness in order to liberate mankind who was held in damning bondage (cf Heb 2:14). In every case that bondage was spiritual, and in numerous cases the bondage was physical as well. In Luke 11:20 Jesus says, “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” In v 15 preceding our text, Jesus says, “The kingdom of God is near.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

With this in mind, we should expect an immediate encounter between God and Satan as Jesus begins his ministry as well as numerous skirmishes between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness throughout his ministry. The incident in our text is consistent with Jesus’ mission. No wonder there are so many instances of exorcism in the first chapter of Mark! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Jesus had just called the four “fishing” disciples, as recorded in last week’s Gospel reading, Mk 1:14–20. This fivesome then made an appropriate first stop—in a Capernaum synagogue. (Capernaum may have had several synagogues, since the minimum requirement was only ten married Jewish men.<sup>i</sup>) In this synagogue, these infant disciples would be taught an important lesson regarding Jesus’ authority. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

The synagogue served mostly as a place of the Word. Whereas the temple was mainly a place of worship and sacrifice, the service in the synagogue would consist of prayer, reading Scripture, and an exposition of that Word.<sup>ii</sup> Therefore, the synagogue was the ideal place for the true Word, Jesus, to reveal himself with authority. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

Note that the work of Satan and his demons is discussed both before and after this text—during Jesus’ temptation in the desert in 1:13, and in 1:34 and 39. Such frequency of mentioning the devil and his work is understandable, considering the nature of Jesus’ work on earth. Christ’s primary mission of saving man would also require destroying the devil’s work (Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

First, the heading of Mark’s Gospel—“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”—seems to be a title that governs his whole account of Jesus’ life and passion. Thus, Mark’s account is intentionally open-ended and unfinished; Mark seems to have ended his account with the women leaving the tomb in astonishment and fear (16:8). This unsatisfactory conclusion led the Church to supply more appropriate endings that included resurrection appearances, a commissioning of the apostles, and the ascension to the right hand of the Father. Such elements certainly brought Mark into conformity with the other Synoptic Gospels. However, it appears that originally Mark himself sees the narrative of Christ as only a “beginning.” The true ending of the Gospel of Jesus Christ continues to unfold in the life of the Church as she proceeds toward the second coming of Christ and the eschatological kingdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Second, Mark defines the Gospel of Christ as a baptismal narrative. Mark begins with John the Baptist, who describes Jesus as one who “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (1:8). Thus, the whole Gospel should be read as a baptismal narrative. This interpretation is supported by Mark’s account of Jesus’ Passion. On the cross, Jesus “exspires” (*exepneusen*), that is, he “breathes out the Spirit” (15:37). When the Spirit is breathed into the face of the centurion, he makes his confession (15:39). By means of inspiration, the centurion declares Jesus to be the “Son of God.” Thus, the title “Son of God” is present in the heading of Mark’s Gospel; it proceeds from the Father’s own lips at Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan; and it is the confession of the centurion at the cross. However, this title is also found in the mouth of the

demons (3:11). Thus, Jesus' interaction with the devil and his demons must be seen as inherent to his baptismal mission. What the Father declares from the height of heaven, the demons must echo from the depths of hell. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**1:21-22** Jesus' authoritative Word that confronted the congregation of Capernaum permitted neither theoretical reflection nor theological debate. Jesus' teaching, the content of which was succinctly outlined in Mk 1:14–15, was simple and direct: believe me and my message. It was a sweeping mandate, unlike anything they'd heard from the scribes.<sup>iii</sup> (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

No scribe ever spoke on his own. He would always preface his statements with, "There's a teaching that . . ." Or he would quickly shore up declarations with quotes from so-called "authorities."<sup>iv</sup> Jesus, however, spoke with a direct line. He cited no authorities other than his own Father in heaven—a citation that would later "ticket" him with other so-called "authorities." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

**1:21** *Capernaum* – Evidently they were already close to it. Though Jesus had been in Capernaum before (Jn 2:12), this occasion was his first public appearance there. Evidently Andrew and Peter had already moved to Capernaum from Bethsaida (cf verses 29-31) and Jesus, too, had moved to Capernaum, though he said later that he had no home of his own (Mt 8:20). (Lenski)

Its situation on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and at the intersection of several important trade routes made Capernaum an ideal base for carrying the gospel into the regions of Galilee and beyond. (PBC)

*immediately* – The RSV calls attention to parallelism in the text by matching the "immediately" prefacing Jesus' entrance into the synagogue (v 21) with the "immediately" prefacing the emergence of the demoniac in the audience (v 23). The parallelism is evident in the original Greek by the repetition of *euthus*. This parallelism suggests that the structure of the text is that of thesis and documentation. Vv 21–22 make the generalization about Jesus' authority, while vv 23–28 provide a specific example of that authority. The movement of the text is deductive: from large to small, from wide to narrow, from general to specific. This could well serve as an optional structure for a sermon on this text. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

*euthus*: This word occurs throughout Mark's Gospel; it is often translated as "immediately." However, it typically appears in contexts where Jesus' movement is emphasized. Its first use is 1:3, where Mark quotes Is 40:3 in reference to John the Baptist, who is sent to "prepare the way" for Jesus and "make his paths straight (*eutheias*)." Thus, *euthus* seems to express the straight, direct, and urgent path that Jesus takes toward the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*synagogue*. A very important religious institution among the Jews of that day. Originating during the exile, it provided a place where Jews could study the Scriptures and worship God. A synagogue could be established in any town where there were at least ten married Jewish men. (CSB)

Like other pious Jews, Jesus joined the community in corporate worship on the Sabbath. (TLSB)

*began to teach*. Jesus, like Paul (see Ac 13:15; 14:1; 17:2; 18:4), took advantage of the custom that allowed visiting teachers to participate in the worship service by invitation of the synagogue leaders. (CSB)

Mark tells us more of what Jesus did than what He taught. However, the reaction of Jesus' controversial teachings – most of which were accompanied by equally provocative actions – produce such outrage in

His opponents (cf 2:5-12, 16-17, 18-19, 23-28; 3:1-5) that they are already planning on killing Him by 3:6. (TLSB)

Jesus lost no time going where He could preach about the Kingdom of God. The verb denotes ingressive action: "He began teaching." (Buls)

*Edidasken*: Mark does not record as much of Jesus' teaching as do Matthew, Luke, or John. By limiting Jesus' words, Mark gives a prominence to Jesus' actions and miracles. Thus, Jesus' miracles do not merely serve to demonstrate the truthfulness of his teaching; rather, they are already the beginning of Jesus' Passion as he enters into conflict with the devil. The miracles are rhetorical actions in which Jesus' identity is being revealed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Since synagogues had no resident ordained ministers, the rules of the synagogue would invite some rabbi (teacher) or scribe present to teach lessons. (PBC)

Mark concentrates upon a single Sabbath when Jesus' synagogue teaching provoked the astonishment of the congregation. The evangelist has no immediate interest in the precise content of Jesus' exposition; its general thrust is sufficiently indicated by chapter 1:15 which summarizes Jesus' proclamation during this initial phase of the Galilean ministry. (Lane)

**1:22** *amazed*. Mark frequently reported the amazement that Jesus' teaching and actions produced (see 2:12; 5:20, 42; 6:2, 51; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18; see also 15:5). (CSB)

The tense and meaning of "amazed" are important. The imperfect denotes ingressive and continued action. It is variously translated "astonished, amazed, astounded," a very strong verb which means literally "to strike out." (Buls)

*exoplēssonto*: This is one of Mark's favorite words for expressing the surprising nature of Jesus' ministry (6:2; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18). This verb is an imperfect passive, which suggests that the people were uncontrollably overwhelmed by Jesus' teaching and miracles. Along with *thambeō* (1:27; 10:24, 32) and *ekstasis* (5:42; 16:8), *exoplēssonto* emphasizes the unexpected and unprecedented character of Jesus' life and work. These words also intentionally make the people's response to Jesus ambiguous. Mark seems to leave the people's response open-ended as a rhetorical tool to invite the hearer of his Gospel to consider his own response to Christ's work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*with authority* – Jesus never used the prophetic formula "thus says the LORD." In contrast to the scribes, whose authority derived from the teachings they received from their forefathers, Jesus spoke as one uniquely authorized by His Father in heaven. (TLSB)

"His teaching" can denote either the act of teaching or the substance thereof. Here evidently the latter is stressed. The periphrastic denotes a constant teaching. NEB, TEB and JB make "authority" adverbial ("With a note of authority" or its equivalent). The other seven translations make it adjectival ("as one that had authority" or its equivalent). We prefer the latter. (Buls)

The people sensed that Jesus Himself was authoritative. "Teachers of the law" means "Bible scholars." Ezra was the first Bible scholar. From the time of the return from the Captivity these "Bible scholars" degenerated into almost worthless teachers. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: The teaching of the scribes was traditional, that is, a fatuous reiteration of sentences and man-made precepts, which would never satisfy the aspirations of the soul. (Buls)

Twice in our text (vv 22, 27) the people recognize the authority of Jesus' teaching. Just what is this "authority" that they recognize? It likely consisted of both the manner and the content of his teaching. It was more than the sternness and directness of Jesus described in v 25, although that probably was part of it. Many of the verbs in our text describing the reaction to or consequence of Jesus' words give us some inkling of Jesus' authority. It could only be the authority of God himself. He spoke and it was so (cf. Gen 1). His word even had the power to drive out the demons. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The Living Bible's paraphrase suggests that, ironically, Jesus displays his authority by not quoting authorities! The citation of rabbinic authorities was the pedantic practice of "the teachers of the law" (v 22), whose words often were no more helpful to people than Nero's fiddling was for quenching the fire in Rome. To paraphrase a modern commercial, "When Jesus speaks, people listen!" When the Primary Source teaches, he needs no secondary sources. Saying what you mean and meaning what you say might be one way of describing authority. Conviction, sincerity, relevance, and directness all play a part, too. Lenski<sup>1</sup> simply equates Jesus' authority with his deity: he acted and spoke like the God he was! Though we may have trouble defining authority, most of us recognize it when we see it. This is especially true when we encounter God's authority. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

In C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Mr. Beaver tells Susan about Asian, the Christ-figure, "You'll understand when you see him." When Susan confesses nervousness about meeting Asian and wonders whether he'll be "quite safe," Mr. Beaver continues, "If there's anyone who can appear before Asian without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly. . . . 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you." So it is with Jesus. We will understand his authority when we see him, and he is the King. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

*Exousia*: This word is used throughout Mark's Gospel (1:27; 2:10; 3:15; 6:7; 11:28, 29, 33; 13:34) in the context of Jesus' miracles and his conflict with the demons. For Mark, *exousia* refers to the reordering of the cosmos; the Creator's will and power to govern the world is now being ordered through the man Jesus and his apostles. The demonic oppression of the human race is being overcome. The surprising character of Jesus' ministry is that the devil is compelled to submit, not merely to the authority of God, but also to the authority of a man. In Jesus, man is given the cosmic authority for which he was created in the beginning. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

His primary emphasis is on the authority of Jesus' teaching and the response of the people, whose astonishment conveys the impression of real alarm. Jesus' word, presented with a sovereign authority which permitted neither debate nor theoretical reflection, confronted the congregation with the absolute claim of God upon their whole person. Jesus' teaching recalled the categorical demand of the prophets rather than scribal tradition. (Lane)

The teaching of the scribes was traditional, that is, a fatuous reiteration of sentences and man-made precepts, which would never satisfy the aspirations of the soul. (Ylvisaker)

There was no appeal to human authority, neither did he resort to subtle logical distinction, legal niceties, witticisms, or clever sayings. (Fahling)

He testified of the Kingdom of the God, which had now come, and as the Lord of heaven he unveiled its mysteries. (Stoekhardt)

Isaiah 42:2 says of the Suffering Servant (Jesus) “He will not shout or cry out.” The commentary on that phrase follows – Although he is certain of his divine call, and brings to the nations the highest and the best, his manner of appearing is nevertheless quiet, gentle, and humble; the opposite of such world conquerors like Sennacherib and Cyrus. He brings what commends itself, and therefore requires no forced trumpeting. He expects his message to carry itself successfully through every test. Parents, pastors or teachers who need remind others who they are, are usually in trouble or in doubt themselves. It seems the more unsure people are, the louder they speak.

*teachers of the law* – Space does not allow a full discussion of the scribes, the Sopherim, of that time. (Buls)

Fahling: There was no appeal to human authority, neither did He resort to subtle logical distinction, legal niceties, witticisms, or clever sayings. Clear and limpid words flowed from the spring, which was itself life and truth. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: Jesus testified of the Kingdom of the God, which had now come, and as the Lord of heaven He unveiled its mysteries. (Buls)

With reference to this verse, Hendriksen draws six points of comparison between the scribes and Jesus. (Buls)

1. He spoke 'with authority';
  2. His message came straight from the very heart and mind of the Father (John 8:26);
  3. His message came from his own inner being, and from Scripture;
  4. The scribes were constantly borrowing from fallible sources, one scribe quoting another scribe;
  5. They were trying to draw water from broken cisterns;
  6. He drew from himself, being 'the Fountain of living waters' (Jeremiah 2:13).
- (Buls)

The divinity of Jesus is plainly implicit in verse 22. (Buls)

They always appealed to the interpretations of past rabbis and were particularly adept at breaking down God’s word into any number of legalistic regulations. Jesus instead always proclaimed the gospel of God. He quoted no experts, but proclaimed the good news on his own authority. (PBC)

**1:23-26** Just as Jesus faced Satan immediately after His Baptism, so also here He is met by a demon-possessed man at the beginning of His teaching ministry. Exorcisms, common in Mark (3:11; 5:13; 9:25), reveal Jesus’ identity and power. (TLSB)

**1:23** *a man in their synagogue ... cried out.* It was actually the demon who cried out. (CSB)

*en pneumati akathartōi*: Jesus’ teaching and presence compels the demons to react. What Jesus does in the flesh reverberates throughout the spiritual world. The description of the demons as “unclean spirits” is a consistent one throughout Mark’s Gospel (1:23, 26, 27; 3:11, 30; 5:2, 8, 13; 6:7; 7:25; 9:25). This description may imply that Jesus’ interaction with the demons is inherently baptismal. Mark defines Jesus’ mission as “baptizing with the Holy Spirit (*en pneumati hagiōi*)” (1:8). This baptizing with the Spirit of Holiness necessitates a conflict with the “unclean” spirits that oppress sinful humanity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

It is not surprising that Satan, despite his defeat in the wilderness, was not ready to let such a message and such a preacher go unchallenged. (PBC)

*possessed by an evil spirit.* Demonic possession intended to torment and destroy those who are created in God's image, but the demon recognized that Jesus was a powerful adversary, capable of destroying the forces of Satan. (CSB)

"Just then" occurred in verse 21. Here we have it again. (Buls)

Bengel: Mark delights in this adverb. It has the effect of beautifully characterizing, especially in the first and second chapters, the rapid career of Christ, who was ever tending towards the goal, and the opportunities rapidly presented to Him, and His rapid success. (Buls)

Lenski and TEV state that this verse means that the person immediately came into the synagogue. The other commentators and versions do not say this, nor does the text. By the way, neither Mark nor Luke says that this person was a "man" in the sense of male. Both use the word "person" which leaves the sex undecided. We are not insisting that it might have been a woman. (Buls)

The verse describes the person, totally possessed by an impure, obscene spirit, a devil. Devil-possession wasn't just illness, affliction or some kind of abnormality. Nor do the Scriptures say that it was caused by a specific sin on the part of the possessed person. Job was not "devil-possessed." Not even Judas is called that. It is not said that Paul, though the thorn in his flesh was devil-sent, was possessed of the devil. In most cases devil possession afflicted the body, but not all. But, in every case of devil-possession, the pitiful victim had no control of self. It occurs with high frequency in the Gospels, much less so in Acts. Furthermore, it is clear from verse 27 that the people somehow knew that it was devil-possession. There was something very terrible about it all. They didn't wonder whether it *was* or *wasn't* devil-possession. They knew. Furthermore, the account in Luke 10:17 -20 clearly shows that the seventy knew that they were dealing with demoniacs. (Buls)

The commentators dwell at length on this phenomenon. Does it occur today? (Buls)

Fahling: As little as the possible occurrence of present day miracles can be denied, just so little the possibility of demoniacal possession. But it would be difficult to establish a particular case. In the writer's opinion they have practically ceased as such, at least in Christian countries. (Buls)

Missionaries in heathen countries have reported instances in which only the Word of God could deal with the situation but even in these instances we ought to be reticent to call it devil possession. Satan knew why Christ had come. He used every foul means at his disposal to keep people from Christ, and to destroy the Kingdom. But the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Through His death Jesus overcame the one who had the power of death, the devil (Hebrews 2:14). (Buls)

Ylvisaker: Human nature is wholly stifled under the alien power of the devil -- it is entirely unresisting and submissive. In possession, the devil employs the human organism as his personal instrument, he speaks and acts as if it were His own. Even the spirit is forced from its central position in the personality of the possessed person, and the human entity is null and void. It is the demoniac spirit which rules and controls the individual. It is the rational principle of the demon which operates through the human personality, thinks its thoughts, speaks its words, and acts its deeds. (Buls)

It's clear that the people in the synagogue knew this was demon possession (see also v 27). There was no questioning whether it *was* or *wasn't*.<sup>v</sup> They would soon question many things about Jesus, but not the reality of demons. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

Many people today do question the reality of demons. They attribute the biblical claims to a less educated, more primitive, superstitious age. They say that those who make any such claims haven't learned from the advances of technology and the medical sciences. But to discount the reality of demon possession has serious ramifications. Since Jesus, speaking to such afflicted people, did indeed address demons, to deny demon possession could only mean one of two things: either Jesus was ignorant of the true origin of the afflictions, or he was acting out a lie.<sup>vi</sup> Either option places Jesus outside the bounds of deity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

His personality had been damaged to the point that the demonic power had usurped the center of his self, and spoke through him. (Lane)

**1:24** *what do you want* – It is not said that the person suddenly appeared. He was ill the synagogue. Evidently, from what is said later, the people knew him. These Notes suggest that this person had been in the synagogue on previous occasions but heard only the unauthoritative droning of the scribes. But when Jesus spoke, suddenly the person shrieked, but he spoke audible and understandable words. According to the Nestle/Aland Greek text the person screamed, a word not read here, but it is found at Luke 4:34, the parallel account. AAT gets this verse correctly: "And he screamed, 'Leave us alone, Jesus from Nazareth! You've come only to destroy us! I know who You are -- God's Holy One!' He's practically saying: "Get out of here!" (Buls)

*us* – Either more than one demon possessed this man (as in 5:9) or Jesus' attack on one demon was a declaration of war on them all. (TLSB)

*Jesus of Nazareth – Iēsou Nazarēne*: This demonic title for Jesus seems to possess a tone of ridicule and mockery. The demons hate and disdain human flesh and blood; according to a tradition reflected throughout the New Testament, the devil fell in the beginning, not because he refused to submit to God, but because he refused to submit to humanity. The demons disdain the weakness, vulnerability, and mortality of humankind. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*to destroy us – apolesai*: The demon's question may reflect their expectation that the Son of God has come to "destroy" them. They expect Jesus to gain the victory by means of violence, power, and domination. The demons expect Jesus to act in the same way that they treat humanity. What is interesting is that Jesus does not "destroy" them; Jesus' mission is not to destroy demons, but to save and cleanse humanity. This same truth is found again in 5:1–13. The demons expect Jesus to "torment" them; Jesus does not torment them, but sends them into the swine. The demons are consistently surprised by God's love for weak and vulnerable humanity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

After the outcome of the temptation (vv 12-13; cf Mt. 4:10-11), the demons expect only punishment from Jesus. (TLSB)

*know who you are* – Is the person making a question or a statement? Bengel, Stoeckhardt, Lenski and AAT take it as a statement of fact and these Notes consider that correct. What is the antecedent of "we know?" Is this man identifying himself with other devils or with the people? (Buls)

At Mark 5 and Luke 8, in the account of the devil-possessed, we read that many devils possessed one man. But that is not said here in Mark 1 :24. These Notes, therefore, take the position that "we know" does not mean "me and fellow devils" but "me and these other people" He was telling Jesus to quit

teaching and to leave because He was the enemy of the people. And when he says: "I know who You are, the Holy One of God," he was picturing Jesus as the destroyer of man, quite the opposite of Luke 19:10: "The Son of man has come to seek and save that which is lost." (Buls)

*the Holy One of God.* Apart from the parallel in Lk 4:34, the title is used elsewhere only in Jn 6:69 and points to Christ's divine origin rather than his Messiahship (see Lk 1:35). The name was perhaps used by the demons in accordance with the occult belief that the precise use of a person's name gave certain control over him. The man was possessed by more than one demon (see 5:9), but only one spoke. (CSB)

In the ancient world, people believed that knowing the real name of a divine being gave one control over that deity. This demon knew Jesus' true identity and yet could not overcome Him. Though the demons often use messianic title for Jesus, the disciples fail to do so until much later (8:29). Their slowness to recognize Jesus' messianic status is a major theme in Mark. (TLSB)

"God's Holy One" occurs only here, in the parallel at Luke 4:34, and in the mouth of Peter at John 6:69. But the difference is tremendous. Satan is using this demoniac as a missionary to picture Jesus as the destroyer of men. Peter used the same term, acknowledging that Jesus is the *Savior* of men. Of course, if people reject Jesus, He becomes their Judge and Destroyer. It was true in this devil's case. He knew and he trembled. James 2:19. But it was not true of the people to whom Jesus was preaching. Can anything be more diabolical than to picture Jesus as the enemy of mankind? (Buls)

An amazing fact is that the demons always recognize Jesus as God, such as in Mt 8:29 (Son of God); Mk 5:7 (Son of the Most High God); and in our text as "the Holy One of God."<sup>vii</sup> Such knowledge can only come supernaturally—either by the believer as joyful confession, or by the unbeliever as reluctant admission. Either way, it confirms the words of Phil 2:11 (every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

*Ho hagois tou theou:* The demons are compelled to acknowledge what the Father has said concerning Jesus at his Baptism in the Jordan. Here they refer to him as the "Holy One," which reflects the gift of the "Holy Spirit" (1:8) given at the Jordan (1:10). In 3:11, the demons echo exactly what the Father declared at the Jordan; and in 5:7, the demons confess him to be "Son of the Most High God." These demonic confessions certainly demonstrate the power of Baptism. While humankind may reject what the Father says at the waters of Baptism, the demons possess no such luxury; they must of necessity acknowledge the Father's word. However, these titles may also possess a note of surprise and wonder. The demons are amazed that the power of God is found in the weakness of a flesh-and-blood man, Jesus of Nazareth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

That the demonic powers possess a certain knowledge of Jesus' identity is clear from the cry of recognition, "I know who you are, the Holy One of God." The unclean spirit recognizes Jesus as the Holy One of God, the Bearer of the Holy Spirit, and between the Holy Spirit and an unclean spirit "there exists a deadly antithesis that the demons know." This formula of recognition, however, does not stand alone. It is part of a larger complex of material exhibiting a striking difference between the forms of address employed by the demoniacs and the titles used by ordinary sick individuals. The latter group appeal to Jesus as "Lord" (ch 7:8), "Teacher" (ch 9:17), "Son of David" (ch 10:47-48) or "Master" (ch 10:51). The demoniacs, however, address Jesus as "the Holy One of God" (ch 1:24, "the Son of God" (ch 3:11) or Jesus as the divine Son of God." The contrast in address is an important recognition-formula is not a confession, but a defensive attempt to gain control of Jesus in accordance with the common concept of that day, that the use of the precise name of an individual or spirit would secure mastery over him. (Lane)

**1:25 *Be silent!*** Lit. “Be muzzled!” Jesus’ superior power silences the shrieks of the demon-possessed man. (CSB)

Note that Satan's missionary is described with "cried out" in verse 24. Jesus' speech is introduced with the same word. The demoniac shrieked. Jesus sternly rebuked and forbade. Why did Jesus say: "Be muzzled and come out of him?" Commentators point out that Jesus would not allow demon possessed people to use His titles. Why not? Because this devil was using this title with a meaning quite the opposite of what it really means. And, lest the demon-possessed would say anything else to turn the people against Jesus, by His almighty Word Jesus absolutely forbids him to say anything else and makes the demon come out of the man. (Buls)

Nearly the exact same Greek words in Mk 1:26 (literally “and shouting with a great voice”) are used for Jesus on the cross as he shouted, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit” (Lk 23:46—*kai phōnēsas phonēi megalēi*). In the Mark passage, Jesus achieved one of many tactical victories over Satan. In the Luke verse, Jesus triumphantly shouted his final and strategic victory over sin, death, and the devil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

*phimōthēti kai exelthe ex autou*: Jesus’ rebuke reveals his utter concern for humanity. Jesus does not seek to destroy the demons, nor merely to demonstrate his own authority and power, but to remove the demonic oppression from the man before him. For Jesus, it is unseemly and repulsive that demons should use human tongues and human bodies to speak their thoughts and accomplish their will. Jesus’ refusal to allow the demons to speak is part of the messianic secret emphasized throughout the Gospel of Mark. For Mark, the full revelation of Jesus’ identity awaits the cross and resurrection. Jesus wishes to be revealed precisely in his Passion. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**1:26 *unclean spirit*** – akatharton is unclean because he could only produce that which was impure, obscene and diabolical.

Just as Jesus had made a distinction between the evil spirit and the person in verse 25, so in this verse an even clearer distinction is made. The demon shakes the man. The demon is called "unclean" because he could produce only that which was impure, obscene and diabolical. (Buls)

*convulsing him* – This incident teaches three things: 1) the personal existence of the devil; 2) that the devil has a terrific power, which can harm no one, however, who is protected by him who is stronger; 3) that the devil never willingly but only through necessity, releases his victim. (Ylvisaker)

φωνῆ μεγάλῃ—This is a dative of means, “with a loud voice.” (CC)

"Shook" does not denote laceration, as might be indicated by the KJV , but convulsion, as is clearly stated by most of our translations. The Lukan parallel clearly states that the demon did not harm the man. Jesus would not permit it. (Buls)

Again the verb "call out" evidently denotes a shrieking, a painful cry. The demon does not leave the man willingly. The devil never lets go willingly. (Buls)

Bengel: This prohibition ('be silenced') did not prevent the cry of the unclean spirit when going out of the man, but merely the utterance of articulate words, such as are mentioned at verse 24. (Buls)

Fahling: Jesus' words sufficed. One wild paroxysm, and the poor sufferer was free from demoniacal possession; one final fit, and he was perfectly healed. (Buls)

Lenski: Mark uses this as the first miracle of the many recorded in his Gospel. It fits most perfectly the theme of this first half of his Gospel, Jesus proving himself to be the Christ, God's Son, by His mighty teaching and deeds. (Buls)

But isn't it remarkable that Jesus says nothing of Himself? The demon had announced Jesus as "The Holy One of God" but Jesus forbade him to say more. Jesus did not come saying: "I am the Son of God, the Son of man, the Messiah, the Christ." By His words and deeds Jesus caused people to come to that conclusion. Cf. John 4:25-26. Only after the woman began speaking about the Messiah did Jesus identify Himself. Cf. John 10:22-26. His enemies say: "If you are the Christ, tell us openly." In verse 25 He declares to them that He told them that He was the Christ by the miracles which He performed. But they reject Him and His miracles. When He walked with the Emmaus disciples He did not permit them to know Who He was until He had gone through many or passages to describe the kind of Savior they truly needed, not one of their own making. Then He permitted Himself to be identified. (Buls)

*phōnēsan phōnēi megalēi*: For Mark, Jesus' conflict with the devil begins immediately following his Baptism and continues through the Passion. Thus, Mark tells of this conflict in language that looks forward to the cross. "Crying out with a loud voice" expresses the dramatic conflict that is taking place; the "great voice" may bear the connotation of a cry heard in the midst of an intense battle. This same language appears again in 5:7. However, most significantly, it appears twice in Mark's account of the crucifixion (15:34, 37). Jesus cries out with a great voice as his battle with the devil is brought to a victorious end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

The silencing and expulsion of the demon is the proof of that judgment which Jesus has come to initiate. To have allowed the defensive utterance of the demon to go un-rebuked would have been to compromise the purpose for which Jesus came into the world, to confront Satan and strip him of his power. (Lane)

**1:27** *all amazed* – "Amazed" is another strong verb, a synonym to "astonished" in verse 22, variously translated "amazed, astonished, dumbfounded." In verse 22 the verb is imperfect, denoting a continued state. In verse, 27 we have the aorist, denoting an explosion of amazement. Its subject is "all the people", denoting unanimous amazement and wonder. Might it include the person who was cured? The sentence reads literally: "And, as a result, all were so dumbfounded that they questioned among themselves, saying: 'What is this?'" (Buls)

The people were utterly astonished and alarmed at Jesus' word. The same measure of authority with which they had been confronted in his teaching was demonstrated in the word of command to the demon. There had been no technique, no spells or incantations, no symbolic act. There had been only the word. There was no category familiar to them which explained the sovereign authority with which Jesus spoke and acted. (Lane)

*new teaching* – Jesus' teaching is supported by miraculous signs. Because of His deeds, Jesus needed no one to support the truth of His words. His actions spoke clearly for themselves. (TLSB)

"A new teaching!" (v 27) is the people's response to Jesus' words and deeds in the synagogue on that particular Sabbath. This reaction does not suggest that Jesus was a novice, an upstart, or a sensationalist. Actually, the religion he taught, salvation by God's grace through God-given faith, was as old as the fallen world. But in the course of time this old teaching had been obscured by the encrustations of the teachers of the law. Jesus removed these encrustations and revealed this teaching more forcefully and clearly than any previous teacher had done because he himself embodied the grace and truth of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

*didachē kainē*: The use of *kainē* or “new” emphasizes the unprecedented and surprising character of Jesus’ work. This language also connects to the newness of the New Testament (2:21–22; 14:24–25). While Matthew emphasizes Jesus’ ministry as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, Mark gives expression to the new and unexpected nature of the covenant being established in Jesus’ death and resurrection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Note that the text in Nestle/Aland Greek version is that of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. According to the Koine text, KJV and NKJV read: "What new doctrine is this? for with authority etc." (Buls)

Our English versions suggest about eight different translations of what the people said. They differ among themselves for two reasons: 1) The variant readings, and, 2) Punctuation. TEV places a question mark after "Some kind of new teaching?" AAT reads thus: "A new teaching!" NEB reads as does AAT but places a period at the end. "A new kind of teaching! He speaks with authority." Others: "With authority He gives orders etc." If the Nestle reading is correct, perhaps NASB is best: "A new teaching with authority! He commands etc." In other words, they answer their own question. It is a teaching of a kind different from that of the scribes because it is authoritative. That is proved by the fact that "He orders *even* the unclean spirits and, *as a result* they obey Him." It is implied that the scribes could do nothing about demon-possessed people. (Buls)

*with authority*. Jesus’ authority in how he taught (v. 22) and in what he did (here) impressed the people. (CSB)

Commentators disagree about the quality and maturity of the audience’s evaluation of Jesus in v 27 and of the message they spread throughout Galilee in v 28. Did they recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Son of God and the Savior of the world, or did they simply consider him an outstanding teacher, a miracle worker, one more of the prophets? Their reaction seems to indicate wonder and amazement, but not true perception of who Jesus was. Other passages describe how many were impressed with Jesus but did not actually have saving faith in him (Matt 16:14; John 6:14–15). Yet some who at first misunderstood him may later have received true faith and understanding. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Christian understanding is a lifelong process in which the Holy Spirit, working through the Word and Sacraments, ever guides us into the truth. Incomplete as the audience’s response to Jesus may have been, it was a positive response. They seemed to be off to a good start. Although we dare never settle for an incomplete understanding of Jesus in ourselves or in others, neither dare we reject a favorable partial understanding of Jesus simply because it is not yet complete. Rather, we should rejoice in such beginnings and seek through the Gospel to cultivate full maturity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

We must fault the congregation at Capernaum—like the multitudes who would come after them—for not going far enough in their confession. Like most who witnessed Jesus’ miracles, they “wowed” at the “what,” not the “who.” They couldn’t see the man behind the miracle as the one, true God-man, their long-awaited Messiah. They came to church that day for a show, not for salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

Isn’t it sad that the demon understands more than the congregation about who this Jesus really is? He actually says all the right things: Jesus is the Holy One of God and has come to destroy the work of Satan! Yet, for all his shallow knowledge and words, he is destined for destruction, for his knowledge is not faith, nor can it be (James 2:19). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

*epitassei*: This language emphasizes Jesus' authority to govern creation. Here it is used in reference to Jesus' authority over demons (cf also 9:25). It is used in 6:39 in reference to Jesus ordering the five thousand to sit in companies of hundreds and fifties in the miracle of the loaves. Thus, this language emphasizes that God's kingdom is being established on earth through a flesh-and-blood man. The cosmos is being reordered according to God's intention from the beginning. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*they obey him* – It is implied that the scribes could do nothing about the demon-possessed people.

**1:28** *his fame spread everywhere* – "News" is variously translated "His fame," "the news about Him," "His reputation," in all cases referring to Jesus, not the healed man. KJV and NKJV understand the final phrase to mean not only Galilee but also the territory surrounding it. NKJV reads: "throughout all the region around Galilee." All the other versions take it as does RSV: "throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee." In any case, His fame spread geographically to quite an extent. And note that it spread quickly, immediately. (Buls)

Jesus' incredible popularity characterized the early days of His ministry (e.g., v 45; 2:2; 3:8, 20; 4:1). (TLSB)

**QUICKLY** – Note that "quick" occurs three times in this text: 1) In verse 21 Jesus went immediately to the Synagogue; 2) In verse 23 the reaction, on the part of the demon-possessed, to Jesus' preaching was immediate; 3) In verse 28 Jesus' fame spread immediately and quite far. (Buls)

It is remarkable that only the demoniac called Jesus "The Holy One of God" (Buls)

Hendriksen: When the demon declares 'I know' he is not telling a lie. There are certain things that are known to the prince of evil and his servants. Cf. James 2:19. Moreover, some of this knowledge causes them to tremble, to be frightened. They know that for them there is no salvation, only dreadful punishment. ...Jesus is 'holy' in the sense that he had been anointed, hence set apart, separated, for the performance of the most exalted task (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18.19; 19:10; John 3:16; 10:36; 2 Corinthians 5:21). When radicals deny Christ's deity they show less insight than the demons, for the latter are constantly acknowledging it. To be sure, they do not do this in the proper spirit. For reverence they substitute impudence; for joyfulness, bitterness; for gratitude, turpitude. But they do it all the same. (Buls)

And because of this Jesus muzzled the demoniac so that he would say no more. The audience had not yet been brought to the point at which they acknowledged Jesus to be "the Holy One of God." This must have been painful for Jesus. It is incumbent upon every preacher of the Word to bring his hearers to a hearty acknowledgment of the fact that Jesus is the Holy One of God, the Savior of sinners, the Redeemer of the lost, the One Who truly conquered the devil and his hosts. And he must ever remember, as said Luther, that whatever is not of the Word and Sacraments is of the devil. (Buls)

*surrounding region of Galilee* – Meant not only Galilee but also the territory surrounding it. His fame spread geographically to quite an extent.

The report concerning the enigmatic bearer of the authoritative word went forth at once into the surrounding region. The disturbance of men by God had begun. (Lane)

**1:21–28** Jesus' authoritative teaching and power over the unclean spirits create an immediate stir among those beholding Him in the early days of His ministry in Galilee. Today, we often see the same thing. People continue to be interested in and even amazed by Jesus' teaching, and yet many fail to depend on

Him for life and salvation. By the power of His authoritative Word and Spirit, however, others are indeed brought into saving faith and life. • Lord Jesus, move us to an unquestioning trust and mature faith in You. By the power of Your Word and Spirit, make us steadfast in the hope of glory. Amen. (TLSB)

