

# 1 CORINTHIANS 8:6B

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Brad Norman

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 8. In chapters 8–10 Paul was dealing with the subject of food sacrificed to idols. He was responding to a letter from the Corinthian believers, and this was one of the topics that they asked him about. But Paul did not focus on food right away in his response. Instead he focused on the issue of knowledge. And in verses 1–3 he focused on a danger that comes with having spiritual knowledge. It has the potential to lead to being puffed up if we're not careful. And knowledge that's accompanied by arrogance is lacking because it's not going to be used properly. We'll end up using it to hurt others. So we need to make sure that our knowledge is paired with love so that we can build them up. And we should focus on loving God, because that will naturally lead to loving others.

Now in verses 1–3 Paul didn't give any details about the spiritual knowledge that he was talking about. But in verse 4 he was ready to discuss some specific areas of knowledge. He said, "We know that 'an idol is nothing in the world,' and that 'there is no God but one.'" Paul was quoting two statements from the Corinthian believers here, and he was agreeing with them. The first statement is focused on the fact that an idol has no real existence. It's completely helpless and worthless because it doesn't any power to do anything. Then the second statement focuses on how there is only one God. Scripture teaches clearly that Yahweh alone is the true God. This fact is one of the basic truths of Christianity. It's something that every Christian believes.

Then in verses 5–6 Paul explained these two statements in more detail. Look at what he wrote in these two verses: "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'—yet for us there is one God, the Father. All things are from him, and we exist for him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through him, and we exist through him." In verse 5 we have the beginning of a conditional sentence. Paul was considering the possibility that he was wrong about there being only one God. He was just assuming that he was wrong for the sake of the argument. He was basically playing devil's advocate. But he added an important phrase to show us that he didn't really believe he was wrong. He didn't just say "gods" but "so-called gods."

The phrase "so-called" is very important. On the surface it shows that idols were called gods by some people. But the implication is that they weren't really gods and that it was inappropriate to use that term. They don't really deserve to be called "gods." But then Paul ended verse 5 with the statement "as there are many 'gods' and many 'lords.'" So he seemed to be confirming the possibility that he mentioned earlier in the verse. In fact, he was making an even stronger statement, because he didn't just say that there are some gods. He said that there are many gods. And then he also said that there are many lords as well.

This word “lords” is just another way of referring to the idols. They were called gods and lords, because both terms described how they were viewed. They were seen as deities who deserved our submission.

Now at first glance it seems like Paul was contradicting what he said in verse 4. He told us that an idol is nothing and that there’s only one God. But then at the end of verse 5 he said that there are many gods. So how do we resolve this apparent contradiction? The key is to remember that Paul just referred to these gods as “so-called gods” in the beginning of the verse. So when he mentioned that there are many gods at the end of the verse, he was still talking about so-called gods. The Christian Standard Bible confirms this interpretation by putting the words “gods” and “lords” in quotation marks. And the English Standard Version has the same feature. Both of these translations are showing us that Paul didn’t really think these idols were gods and lords. That’s just how people talked about them.

Now we might think that Paul went on to finish his conditional sentence in verse 6. But instead he made a statement that’s true regardless of whether the condition is met. So he jumped ship on the conditional statement and decided to introduce a strong contrast. In verse 5 he was giving the perspective of unbelievers. They’re the ones who think that there are many gods and many lords. But in verse 6 he gave us the perspective of believers by using the phrase “for us.” And then he said that “there is one God.” So Paul was basically just repeating what he said at the end of verse 4. But then he explained what he meant by the word “God.” He referred to God as “the Father.”

Now in the Old Testament it was very rare for God to be called the Father. But in the New Testament we see many references to God as the Father. We looked at some of them last week, and we won’t review them today. But I’ll just summarize by saying that it’s a wonderful privilege for us as Christians to have God our Father. We haven’t just been saved from the penalty of our sins. We’ve been adopted into his family. He provides for us and protects us. And in verse 6 Paul made two statements about God the Father. He said, “All things are from him, and we exist for him.” So in the first statement Paul was basically saying that all things came into existence because of the Father. He’s the source of all things because he created everything.

Then in the second statement Paul focused on why the Father created the universe. The reason all things exist is for him and his glory. He created us and everything else in the world because he wanted to show how great he is. So he didn’t make us so that we could live for our own purpose and pleasure. He made us to glorify him and live in obedience to him. In 1 Corinthians 10:31 Paul said, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” This is a powerful verse that we should reflect on regularly. We need to remind ourselves that we don’t have the right to do whatever we want. We need to live in submission to God and act in ways that please him. We need to bring him honor and glory in everything that we do.

Now let’s look at the rest of verse 6 in 1 Corinthians 8. We’re ready to cover some new material. Look at what Paul wrote in the second half of this verse: “And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through him, and we exist through him.” So earlier in verse 6 Paul said that “there is one God,” and here he said almost the same thing. He just switched from the word “God” to the word “Lord.” The Greek

word for Lord is the same one that we just saw at the end of verse 5. Paul said that there were many idols that people called “lords,” but here in verse 6 he said that there was one Lord. And he was just making the same connection that he already made with the word “God.” So there were many so-called gods and lords, but there was only one God and one Lord.

We see these two words used together frequently in the Old Testament. Let me show you a particularly powerful example. Look at Deuteronomy 10:17: “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awe-inspiring God, showing no partiality and taking no bribe.” So in this verse Moses was speaking to the Israelites right before they were about to enter the promised land. And he reminded them about who their God was. Moses called him “the God of gods and the Lord of lords.” So there were many idols that were called gods and lords. But Yahweh was infinitely greater than all of them. He was the God far above all gods and the Lord far above all lords. I suspect that Paul may have been thinking about this verse as he was writing 1 Corinthians 8:6.

Now Moses was apparently talking about the same person when he used the words “God” and “Lord.” But that’s not what Paul was doing when he used these two words in verse 6. When he used the word “God,” he clarified that he was talking about the Father. And when he used the word “Lord,” he clarified that he was talking about Jesus Christ. The word “Jesus” is a name that’s used almost 1,000 times in the New Testament. And we can learn more about this name in the very first chapter of the New Testament. In Matthew 1 an angel told Joseph through a dream that he was to take Mary as his wife, even though she was pregnant. Look at what the angel said in verse 21: “She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

So the end of the verse shows us that this name has a special connection to the theme of salvation. And we can confirm this fact by tracing the origin of this name. The English word “Jesus” is the Latin form of the Greek name “Iesous.” And this name is the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Yehoshua,” which we pronounce “Joshua” in English. This Hebrew name simply means “Yahweh saves.” So the name “Jesus” refers to the fact that God saves. When Jesus came to earth about 2,000 years ago, he died on the cross to save us from our sins. He took our place and suffered the punishment that we deserved. In 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul said that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” That’s the heart of the gospel right there! That’s what the name “Jesus” is all about.

But Jesus didn’t just come to be our Savior. He came to be our Lord as well. That word is used constantly to refer to Jesus in the New Testament. I counted 92 times in just Paul’s letters where he referred to Jesus as Lord, and 16 of them are found in 1 Corinthians. Let me show you a few that we’ve already seen in this letter. The first one is found in chapter 1 and verse 2. Look at what Paul wrote in this verse: “To the church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and ours.” So first Paul referred to Christ Jesus, but then he reversed those words and added the word “Lord.” And he emphasized that Jesus Christ is both their Lord and ours. He’s the Lord of all who believe in him.

Now look at chapter 1 and verse 9: “God is faithful; you were called by him into fellowship with his Son,

Jesus Christ our Lord.” So once again Paul referred to Jesus Christ as our Lord. But the focus here is on the fellowship that we enjoy with him. When God saved us, he forgave our sins and reconciled us to himself. Now we’re no longer his enemies but his friends, and we experience fellowship with his Son. Now look at chapter 1 and verse 10, which is the very next verse: “Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction.” So the Corinthian believers were split into factions, but Paul urged them to get rid of their divisions. He commanded them to be unified, and he spoke to them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let’s look at the most recent place where we’ve seen a reference to Jesus as Lord. Look at chapter 6 and verse 11: “And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” So we used to be dead in our sins. But then God saved us through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He washed our sins away and declared us to be righteous. So the word “Lord” is one of Paul’s favorite terms for describing Jesus. Now many people think that this word is a name, but it’s actually just a title. The Greek word here is pronounced “kurios,” and it’s used over 700 times in the New Testament. It can also be translated with the word “master.” It normally stresses the idea of authority, and so it shows that Jesus is in charge and that we must submit to him.

Now some people think that we can be saved without submitting to Jesus as our Lord. But the New Testament teaches otherwise. Acts 16:31 tells us that we must believe in the Lord Jesus to be saved. In other words, we can’t receive him as our Savior without also recognizing him as our Lord. We see the same truth taught in Romans 10. Look at what Paul wrote in verses 9–13: “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

So Paul made it very clear in verse 9 that if we’re going to be saved, we must confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord. In other words, we need to acknowledge him as our master and submit our lives to his authority. And if we trust in the Lord Jesus alone for salvation, then verse 11 says we will not be put to shame on judgment day. Instead we’re going to experience all the spiritual blessings that God has promised to give us. Then in verse 13 Paul reiterated what he said in verse 9. He stated that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Now in this verse Paul was actually giving us a quotation from the Old Testament. More specifically, he was quoting the beginning of Joel 2:32. And in that verse the word LORD is in all caps to show us that Joel was using God’s name, Yahweh.

Now when the Old Testament was translated into Greek around 250 B.C., God’s name was not represented like other names. It was not brought into Greek with a transliteration or a letter-for-letter equivalent. That’s because the Jews stopped speaking God’s name sometime after the Hebrew Old Testament was completed. So God’s name was translated with the Greek word “kurios” instead. And when the writ-

ers of the New Testament gave us a quote from the Old Testament, they normally used this standard Greek translation, which is called the Septuagint. But they didn't alter the Septuagint's approach to handling God's name. That's why Paul used the Greek word "kurios" in Romans 10:13 when he quoted Joel 2:32. But the original Hebrew text has Yahweh, God's name.

So when the New Testament refers to Jesus as Lord, sometimes it's going beyond a simple recognition of his authority. When Paul said in Romans 10:13 that we need to call on the name of the Lord to be saved, he was basically proclaiming in a subtle way that Jesus is Yahweh. Hebrews 1:3 says that "the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature." Paul wrote in Colossians 2:9 that "the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ." And I think that Paul was hinting at this truth in 1 Corinthians 8:6. He wasn't just saying that Jesus is one of many earthly masters. His point was that Jesus is far above all human masters. Paul said in Romans 10:12 that he's "Lord of all." He deserves our worship and full submission because he's God just like the Father is.

And 1 Corinthians 8:6 is not the only place where we see God the Father and God the Son mentioned side by side. Look back at chapter 1 and verse 3: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul used this exact greeting in six of other letters. He even ended one of his letters with a similar statement. Look at Ephesians 6:23: "Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." So when Paul listed God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ side by side, he was showing that they're on the same level. They're both fully God. Now Paul didn't refer to the Holy Spirit in any of these verses. But Paul wasn't implying that the Spirit isn't God. That would be an argument from silence, and it would contradict a number of Scripture passages. Look at 2 Corinthians 13:13: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." So in this verse Paul made it clear that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all on the same level. That's why we believe in the Trinity and not just a duality.

So we've seen in 1 Corinthians 8:6 that Paul referred to Jesus as Lord. But notice that Paul also referred to him with the word "Christ." Now we tend to think of the word "Christ" as the last name of Jesus. After all, it often appears right after the word "Jesus" like we have here. But in reality the word "Christ" is a title just like the word "Lord." The word "Christ" is actually a transliteration or a letter-for-letter equivalent of the Greek word "christos," which is used over 500 times in the New Testament. It's parallel to the word "Messiah," which is a transliteration of the Hebrew word "mashiach." That's because both of these words mean "anointed one." Now in the Old Testament there were three types of people who were anointed. The first group of people and the one that most Christians are familiar with is made up of kings. For example, in the book of 1 Samuel we can see that Saul and David were both anointed by the prophet Samuel to be kings of Israel.

But kings weren't the only group of people who were anointed in the Old Testament. We can see that priests were also anointed. For example, Leviticus 8:12 states that Moses anointed his brother Aaron as the first high priest of Israel. And God said in Leviticus 6:22 that when Aaron died, one of his sons would "be anointed to take his place." But there's one final group of people who were anointed, and they were prophets. For example, in 1 Kings 19:16 God told Elijah to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place. But Deu-

teronomy 18:15 teaches that one day God would raise up a special prophet. And Jeremiah 23:5 shows that a special descendant of David would rule as king and deliver his people. Psalm 110:4 tells us that this future king would be “a priest forever according to the pattern of Melchizedek.”

So there would be a special Messiah or anointed one who would fulfill all three of these roles. That’s what we should be thinking about when we see Jesus called “Christ” in the New Testament. He’s the supreme prophet because he always speaks God’s words. In John 12:50 he said, “I speak just as the Father has told me.” But Jesus is also the supreme priest because he offered himself as the perfect sacrifice once for all. Hebrews 10:10 says that “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time.” And one day he will return and reign as the supreme king on the earth. Revelation 19:16 calls him the “King of kings and Lord of lords.” He’s worthy to save us because he’s our Messiah and the ultimate prophet, priest, and king.

So in 1 Corinthians 8:6 we have a loaded statement about Jesus. We can see that he’s called both “Lord” and “Christ.” And he’s listed alongside God the Father to stress their equality. But it’s important to note that the Father is listed before the Son, and that’s usually the case when we see them mentioned side by side in the New Testament. That’s because there’s a sense in which the Father is greater than the Son. Listen to what Jesus himself said in John 14:28: “If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.” Now Jesus wasn’t saying that he’s not equal with the Father in his personhood. The Son is fully God just like the Father is. But the Son has a different role than the Father. Listen to what Jesus said in John 8:29: “The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him.” So the Father sent the Son to earth, and the Son always pleases the Father. We could summarize by saying that the Father is the leader in the Trinity and that the Son submits to the Father.

And this observation leads naturally to what Paul said at the end of 1 Corinthians 8:6. Here’s what he said about Jesus: “All things are through him, and we exist through him.” Now the Christian Standard Bible has a new sentence here, but in the original Greek we have a relative clause. The Legacy Standard Bible has a more literal translation. It says that there is “one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.” But the Christian Standard Bible isn’t making any significant change to the meaning of the text. It’s just giving a more readable translation. And actually it’s more literal than the Legacy Standard Bible with the translation of the prepositions. The Legacy Standard Bible has the word “by” and then the word “through.” But the Christian Standard Bible has the word “through” twice because the same Greek preposition is used both times here.

So first Paul said that all things are through Jesus. Now there’s actually no verb here in the original Greek. But that’s not unusual, and when that happens we should normally just add the verb of being in English. That’s what the Christian Standard Bible and most other translations do here. But we could put the word “came” here instead. That’s what the New International Version does, and I think it communicates the right idea. So Paul was basically saying that all things came into existence through Jesus. John said the same thing about Jesus in John 1:3: “All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.” Now earlier in 1 Corinthians 8:6 Paul said that all things are

from the Father. So the Father is the ultimate source of all things. But he created everything through Jesus. We could say that he delegated the work of creation to Jesus. They worked together on this project, but the Father was behind the scenes while the Son was more actively involved.

But Paul made one more statement about Jesus here. He said that “we exist through him.” Once again there’s no verb here in the original Greek. So we could add the verb of being and say that “we are through him.” But the Christian Standard Bible and most other translations have the word “exist,” and I think that’s the best choice. Now earlier in the verse Paul said that we exist for the Father. And the point is that we exist for his glory. Now Paul wasn’t rejecting the idea that we also exist for the Son’s glory. That would be another argument from silence. Instead Paul just decided to focus on the fact that we exist through Jesus. So we were created through Jesus, and we also continue to exist through Jesus. If Jesus didn’t sustain us through his great power, we would immediately cease to exist.

And this fact isn’t just true about us. It’s also true about the entire universe. Listen to what Paul said about Jesus in Colossians 1:17: “He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.” The writer of Hebrews said something very similar in chapter 1 of his letter. Listen to the first half of verse 3: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” You know, it’s easy for us to picture Jesus as the baby in the manger or as the man on the cross. But we need to remember that Jesus is also God. He’s the Lord of the entire universe. He created everything and sustains everything. Our existence depends completely on him. So let’s make sure that we don’t just think of Jesus as a humble man who died for our sins. He’s also the all-powerful God who’s completely sovereign over our lives. Let’s close in prayer and express our worship to him.