



Thinking Christianly

1 Corinthians ch8

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- ▶ Contrast
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Church
 - Conscience and Controversy
- ▶ Conclusion



Contrast

- ▶ Knowledge
- ▶ Love



Cultural context: C1st Greece



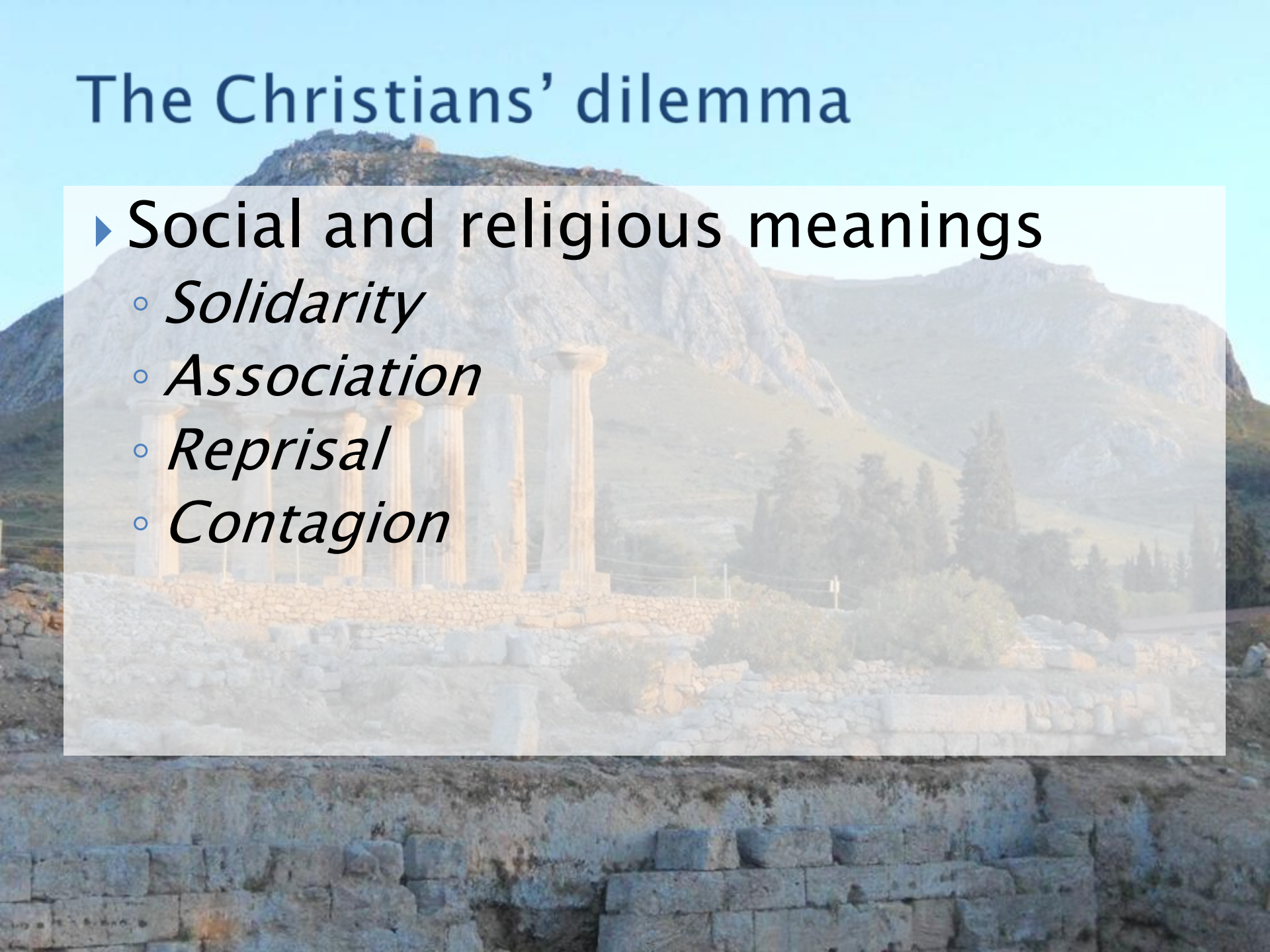
- ▶ Many active temples
 - Priests sent excess sacrificial meat to the market to be sold cheaply
 - What if invited to eat at a friend or relative's house? ch10:25–27.

Cultural context: C1st Greece

- ▶ Many active temples
 - *Celebratory feasts* in the temple precincts
 - Annual rituals of thanksgiving e.g. for the grape harvest.
 - private dinners e.g. craft guild
 - charitable meals laid on for the poor.

The Christians' dilemma

- ▶ Social and religious meanings
 - *Solidarity*
 - *Association*
 - *Reprisal*
 - *Contagion*



Church context: C1st Greece

- ▶ Pagan Background Believers (PBBs)
- ▶ New knowledge
 - there was only one God and one saviour in Jesus the Christ.
- ▶ -> freedom from fear

The Corinthian Controversy

- ▶ To eat or not to eat?
- ▶ Two parties
 - The Freedom Conscience Party.
 - "Everything is permissible".
 - The Fearful Conscience Party.
 - "It's better to be safe than be sorry".



Paul's Answer

▶ Commends their strong monotheism.

- "gods" and "lords" of Greek mythology do not exist. v6. ✓
- not thinking magically about food. Food does not bring us near to God v8. Acts 10 (Peter's vision). ✓
- Free from fear – GREAT ✓

Paul's Answer

▶ But – v9

- Filled with pride in their knowledge they have forgotten love. 
- Knowledge puffs up but love builds up. V1
- Forgotten consideration for the 'weaker' members. 

Paul's Answer

- ▶ Meaning of 'weak conscience'
 - The brother or sister who still fears the Greek gods. Chp 10 not gods – demons.
 - Participation –> troubled conscience, unable to sleep, afraid of losing God's blessing or their salvation
 - Danger of slipping back into that world. compromise –> compromise –> confusion –> falling into sin.

Paul's Guiding Principles

- ▶ Ask yourself:–
 - Is it loving?
 - Does it set a good example to the weaker or new believers?
 - Is it a good witness? 10:27–29
 - Does it prioritise fellowship over freedom?

Application

- ▶ Culture meets Gospel
 - Food
 - Work dinners
 - Use of our wealth
 - Sexual ethics
 - Vote

Conclusion: Paul's challenge

- ▶ Be willing to limit your own freedom for the sake of the weak
- ▶ Always be guided by Love:–
 - ▶ "Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others"
v24