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# 1 Corinthians

**For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:17**

In this verse, Paul builds upon the thought that, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" He just stated this and now begins with "for we" in order to continue and expand upon those words. There is a grand church, filled with many people from many cultures and places. It is filled with men and women, young and old, and from people of every color. And yet, despite this diversity, we "are one bread *and* one body." The word "and" is not in the original and so a semicolon shows the thought better - "We are one bread; one body."

And the reason for this is that "we all partake of that one bread." Paul just showed that the bread is to be considered "communion" with "the body of Christ." Bread is made of many individual kernels of grain and yet it becomes one unified substance. Likewise, we are individually many people and yet we are "one bread" when we are in Christ. This brings up an obvious question - "Does the taking of the communion bread *result* in our being one body?" The question is important because it is the basis for what Paul is writing about in the first place.

In the coming verses, Paul is going to tell the Corinthians (and thus us) "I do not want you to have fellowship with demons." He will say this in relation to participating in sacrifices to idols and then he will build on that by saying, "... you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." If thought through logically then, the actual bread is not what makes us "one bread." Rather it is the reception of Jesus Christ as Savior that unites us. The bread then is a symbolic

representation of this. It is our way of remembering this bond and communing with the Lord in that remembrance.

And so why is this important? The answer is that 1) It makes no sense for a non-believer to participate in the Lord's Supper. 2) The Lord's Supper is a symbolic participation only; it is not literally the Body of Christ (Roman Catholicism), nor does it mean that we are "spiritually" united with Christ when we take the elements (Calvin). If these were so, then anyone who was a non-believer would be either literally or spiritually communing with the Lord during the reception of the elements. Paul excludes this.

His words here are intended to instruct us that communion is a public demonstration of an inward reality, just as baptism is to be an outward proclamation of a change that has been rendered in one's life. Both are after-the-fact pictures and remembrances of the work of the Lord. Therefore, if we were to eat at the sacrifice of an idol (not the meat itself, but at the ritual of the sacrifice) then we are indicating to those around us that we are willing participants in that particular society or religion, including everything that it constitutes. And yet, if we are truly saved Christians, that participation has no true bearing on our position in Christ. Therefore, the consumption of the meat of the sacrifice cannot be the actual participation with that demon to which it is offered.

This may seem to be splitting hairs, but to Paul it is an immensely important theological distinction that he will explain in detail in verse 23-33. We can eat (as Paul clearly states and allows) the meat that was sacrificed to an idol without any conscience that it will defile us because it cannot defile us. In the same way, a person who is not saved and yet takes the elements of the Lord's Supper cannot be made holy through those elements. It is the *participation* in the ritual that Paul is especially concerned with, not the actual element that is used.

Life application: The careful evaluation of the details which build into a biblical doctrine are important for many reasons. If they are misinterpreted or misunderstood, then further departures from the truth of Christ are inevitable. Eventually, entire systems of improperly administered teachings will prevail. As

Paul said earlier in 1 Corinthians "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." He repeats this in Galatians 5 and equates it directly with proper doctrine.

**Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? 1 Corinthians 10:18**

Paul has been speaking about the Lord's Supper and our partaking of it. How does that fit in with participating in pagan sacrifices? To do both would be completely contrary to the purpose of partaking in the Lord's Supper. As an example for them to consider, he now brings in a lesson from the law itself. In this, he begins with, "Observe Israel after the flesh." This is an unfortunate translation when rendered by the NIV and some other translations which say something like "Consider the people of Israel. In Greek it reads *blepete ton israel kata sarka* - "Consider Israel according to the flesh." He is making a statement about Israel who participated in the sacrifices at the Temple, regardless of whether they were really right with God or not, hence the term "according to the flesh."

All of Israel would go to Jerusalem and offer their offerings to God. Some truly believed and some simply went through the motions, but the sacrifices brought the people together as one. It separated them as a people and showed their united allegiance under the God whom they served. When they went to these sacrifices, they actually participated in most of them. Some, such as the sin offering, were completely burnt up. But most of them were handled differently as Paul notes in the form of a rhetorical question, "Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" The question demands an affirmative answer. "Yes, they are."

A portion of the sacrifice was burned on the altar, a portion of it was given to the priest who conducted the ritual, and the rest of the offering was returned to the one who offered it for him (and his family if applicable) to eat. In this, he participated in what was offered. But it wasn't mere participation, instead the word Paul uses is *koinonoi*. It was a communion with the altar, just as we commune in the Lord's Supper.

Regardless of whether these Israelites were "circumcised in the heart" or merely national Israelites who were only going through the motions, their sacrifices were a communion with the altar and they were thus identified with that altar, with the people of Israel, and with the God to whom the sacrifices were made. If this was the perception by all who saw them as they offered, and if it was also the perception of their fellow Israelites who looked at one another as a corporate body, then doesn't our participation in the Lord's supper convey the same concepts? Likewise, what would people think if they saw us at the sacrifice to an idol?

Regardless of whether the idol is a true god or not (and we know that it isn't), that is irrelevant to the perception we are giving others by our actions if we participate in such a sacrifice when it is made. Paul shows that our actions have consequences because they produce perceptions in the eyes of others which may become a stumbling-block to them.

Life application: Paul shows us that the conscience of others is an important consideration for us as we conduct ourselves as Christians. We need to be understanding of others in our actions which could cause them to misunderstand our freedoms in Christ. However, this does not include all things that people may find offensive. If someone doesn't like something we do, like eating meat because they are vegetarians, that is their problem and not ours. Discernment and understanding of what could be considered a stumbling-block to others takes time to learn.

*Lord give me discernment in order to know*

*What actions may harm the faith of another*

*In this walk with You, it is my desire to show*

*What is right in order to instruct my brother*

*Let me not be the cause of him to stumble*

*But instead help me to be a good guide to show him Jesus*

*What good is it to the team if I make the ball fumble  
That can only harm the goal set before us*

*And so O God, help me to stick close to Your word  
And to always bring honor to Jesus my Lord*

**What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 1 Corinthians 10:19**

In 1 Corinthians 8:4, Paul affirmed that an idol is actually nothing. The fact that man worships something other than the Creator in no way means that it is anything other than the material it is comprised of - metal, wood, flesh, etc. In reality, it is an ineffective lie. Isaiah even uses that term when speaking of idols -

And no one considers in his heart,  
Nor *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say,  
“I have burned half of it in the fire,  
Yes, I have also baked bread on its coals;  
I have roasted meat and eaten *it*;  
And shall I make the rest of it an abomination?  
Shall I fall down before a block of wood?”  
<sup>20</sup> He feeds on ashes;  
A deceived heart has turned him aside;  
And he cannot deliver his soul,  
Nor say, “*Is there* not a lie in my right hand?” Isaiah 44:19, 20

Understanding this, Paul made the affirmation that, “an idol *is* nothing in the world” and that “*there is* no other God but one” (1 Corinthians 8:4). Since that time though, Paul has been using examples of God's judgment on Israel for following after idols. And then in the verse preceding this one he said, "Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" With this noted, some might come to the conclusion that he is equating

the participation in an idolatrous sacrifice with that of the participation in the true temple sacrifices.

And so he asks, "What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?" His answer is, "No," and it is not what he is indicating. Rather, he is showing that the participation in the true temple sacrifices produced a bond between the people. "Israel after the flesh" was united as one, regardless of whether they actually believed in God or not. They went to the feasts, sacrificed at the temple, and ate of their offerings. Thus they were united in their rituals. If a believer were to join with pagans in their sacrifices, those pagans would feel this person was united to them in their belief. Thus he would appear to validate the idol as something even though it is "nothing in the world."

Life application: Our business is to exalt Christ, not idols, demons, angels, Mary, the saints, or anything or anyone else. Let us then exalt Christ, through whom God will receive His just glory.

**Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.**

1 Corinthians 10:20

In this, Paul makes a contrast to his previous thought. It read, "What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?" The meat which had been sacrificed to an idol was merely meat, nothing more. In the verses ahead he will show that we can eat such meat without regard to our conscience (verse 27). However, to ensure that he isn't misunderstood, he does acknowledge that food sacrificed to idols is nothing and then immediately inserts "rather."

The meat is unchanged, but the sacrifice itself is wholly inappropriate to participate in. His words to support this are almost a reflection of a verse from Deuteronomy 32. In that passage, Moses speaks of the people sacrificing to false

gods which are not God and thus they "forgot the God who gave" them birth.  
Here are his words -

"They sacrificed to demons, not to God,  
*To gods* they did not know,  
To new *gods*, new arrivals  
That your fathers did not fear.

<sup>18</sup> Of the Rock *who* begot you, you are unmindful,  
And have forgotten the God who fathered you." Deuteronomy 32:17, 18

By participating in a pagan sacrifice, they are turning from God to a non-god who is actually a demon. If the ritual isn't to God, then it must be to either the devil or a force under the control of the devil. This is the battle we are constantly facing; a spiritual battle against wicked powers. We are told about this in Ephesians 6. There Paul describes the reality of the situation as well as the protection we are to take against it. In verse 12, he says this -

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

As this is the reality of our actions, we should never presume to attend a pagan sacrifice. Paul warns against it because, as he says, "I do not want you to have fellowship with demons." Rather, we are to live in holiness and the exalting of the true God through our worship of Jesus Christ.

Life application: We cannot participate in pagan rituals and come out unscathed. Stand on the word, cling to the Lord, and fix your eyes and thoughts on Him alone.

**You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. 1 Corinthians 10:21**

Paul, having established that a believer who participates in a pagan ritual would actually be fellowshiping with demons admonishes the Corinthians that, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons." His words do not indicate an impossibility of physically carrying out such an action. Rather, they indicate the moral impossibility of it. This is certain because of what he will say in the next verse. We can actually do what he is warning against, but if we do then we are severing a tie of fellowship with the Lord when we do it. As he says in his second epistle -

"...what accord has Christ with Belial?" 2 Corinthians 6:15

The answer is that there is no accord between the two. By participating in pagan rituals, we stand alone with the demon and apart from Christ. This is because "you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." It is an "either/or" situation. The severity of our actions in this matter is noted by Paul in the next chapter. There he will say the following which is a precept that certainly includes the instruction he is now giving -

"Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

In fact, Paul continues in this same set of verses noting the consequences of such actions. They were consequences already seen among the Corinthians -

"For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. <sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged, we



are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." 1 Corinthians 11:30-32

We must take care in how we conduct ourselves. The Lord protects His name jealously and is never pleased when His saved children bring discredit upon it.

Having said this, it should be noted that Paul's words here record the first instance of the words "the Lord's table." This terminology has been used by faithful followers of Christ for 2000 years as we have proclaimed "the Lord's death till He comes." The taking of communion in observance of this is one of the two ordinances commanded by the Lord - baptism and the Lord's Supper. Be sure to partake of this with gratitude and humility.

Life application: The Lord's Supper is a high honor to participate in. Some churches offer it a couple times a year, some once every month or two, but there is nothing wrong and everything right with taking it every time a congregation comes together. It is a continual reminder of the wondrous work of Christ for us.

### **Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?**

1 Corinthians 10:22

As noted in the previous verse, we were told that we "cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons" and that we "cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." In follow up to those words of instruction, Paul's question is, "Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" In other words, by doing this thing which is morally wrong, we will with all certainty provoke the Lord to jealousy. It is the obvious result of participating in idolatry. In the giving of the 10 Commandments, the people of Israel were told explicitly that the Lord is a jealous God. This is stated in the fourth verse –

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the

earth; <sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God." Exodus 20:4, 5

Likewise, a few chapters later in Exodus, the Lord expresses His name as "Jealous." It is the strongest tie possible to the nature of Himself in relation to His redeemed people -

"...for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God." Exodus 34:14

And in a thought directly from the Song of Moses, we see how idolatry is exactly what provoked the Lord to jealousy after they were redeemed from the land of Egypt. It was a constant source of irritation to Him as He led them through the wilderness -

"They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God; They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols." Deuteronomy 32:21

These words of instruction as well as the words of chastisement were given to the people in order to get them to wake up to the holiness of the Lord and their need to cling to Him alone, forsaking all other "gods" which are not gods at all. Though the Law of Moses is now obsolete in Christ and is set aside by His work, we are dealing with the same holy Lord. His nature does not change and our relationship to Him in this regard also does not change. This is the intent of Paul's words which ask, "Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?"

And in order to solidify that, he finishes this verse with the question, "Are we stronger than He?" Vincent's word studies notes that, "The force of the interrogative particle is, surely we are not stronger." In other words, it is an exclamation even though it is put in the form of a question. "We (definitely) are not stronger than He!" He judged His redeemed people Israel and we can expect the exact same Judge's hand when we fall into idolatry. Let us heed this warning.

Life application: In Christ, we have a new relationship which goes far beyond that of ancient Israel. We have a salvation which can never be lost and which unites us to Him so that we are one body. Because of this, we might feel that we are safe from judgment. This is not the case. Later in 2 Corinthians, Paul will speak of the time when we stand before Christ in order to receive our judgment. When that time comes, let us be found approved and not lose the wondrous heavenly rewards that would otherwise be granted to us. Our salvation is secure, but our rewards and losses are being earned through our present walk with Christ.

**All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.** 1 Corinthians 10:23

Paul reveals his thoughts on the delicate matter of eating meat sacrificed to idols in a verse which carries the same tone as he previously made in chapter 6. There he said -

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." 1 Corinthians 6:12

In agreement with the thought that "all things are lawful for me," Paul will issue words to confirm that idea in verses 25-27. The Christian has the liberty to act in ways that demonstrate Christ's fulfillment of the law. We have been freed from restrictions once imposed upon us by that law. However, in agreement with the thought that "not all things are helpful," Paul will issue words to confirm that idea in verses 28 & 29.

There is the truth that our liberties are intended to grant us individual freedoms, and there is the truth that our individual freedoms should not be exercised when they negatively effect the sensibilities of others. Where "all things are lawful" there is the truth that "not all things edify." And if something doesn't edify, then it may actually be destructive. We have to consider the effect of our actions towards others if we are to demonstrate love towards them.

In a wise choice of words, McLaren gives us these thoughts concerning Paul's doctrine -

"He did not keep his 'theology' and his ethics in separate water-tight compartments, having no communication with each other. The greatest truths were used to regulate the smallest duties. Like the star that guided the Magi, they burned high in the heavens, but yet directed to the house in Bethlehem."

Life application: Let us use our freedoms in Christ wisely and for edification. When there is no conflict between what we may do and how it will negatively affect others, then go forward with a clear conscience. But if such a conflict arises, be wise, discerning, and considerate towards those whom we may offend. However, if our actions which uphold a biblical mandate are found to be offensive, that is another issue. We are never to compromise Christian doctrine for the sake of "tolerance."

**Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*.**

1 Corinthians 10:24

The words used by Paul here are still given in relation to food which has been sacrificed to idols, but they form a general principle for any debatable issue. He has already revealed that an idol is nothing, and he has also shown that participating in the sacrifice to an idol aligns a person with that idol and with those who sacrifice to it (even though the idol is nothing). He has shown a distinction between the meat and the ritual, but some may not perceive that distinction. They may tie the two together in their thought process and come to an incorrect conclusion concerning the eating of such meat.

In order to avoid such a stumbling-block in a person like this, Paul will continue to give words for us to consider. Remember, these words follow a general principle even though he is discussing a particular issue. In the end, love should be the first consideration as we conduct our actions before others.

As a side note, the word "well-being" is inserted for clarity, but it is a good choice of wording. Other versions say "good," "welfare," "advantage," and so on. The olde King James Version says "wealth." When it was written, it meant more than what wealth means today and it implied a general sense of well-being. However, as times go by, words evolve and they no longer carry the same signification they once did. This is why it's always good to check with multiple versions and not get myopically fixed on one translation lest misunderstandings arise.

Life application: When we seek out our own well-being first, it is inevitable that others will receive less esteem than they should. It is impossible to exalt ourselves above others while exalting others above ourselves. Thus, we should walk in humility and defer honor to those around us. As the Lord says, "...whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

*Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king  
And do not stand in the place of the great  
For it is better that to your ear he sing  
"Come up here to a higher position, good mate!*

*Humility is a noble and dignified trait  
And something which is highly esteemed by the Lord  
In due time He will exalt you, so patiently wait  
Until the day when He speaks to you a goodly word*

*Be patient and walk in a humble way  
Exalt others and do not your own esteem hunt for  
By doing so you will receive His favor some wondrous day  
When you are brought through heaven's open door*

**Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; 1 Corinthians 10:25**

Paul's words in this verse take us right back to the discussion of verse 17 which said, "For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread." In that analysis, the question was raised, "Does the taking of the communion bread *result* in our being one body?" Paul's answer here shows that the answer is "No."

He instructs the Corinthians (and thus the Gentile-led church) to "eat whatever is sold in the meat market." When we go shopping, there is nothing sold there which is forbidden. If we see a tasty delight of whatever kind of meat and regardless of where it came from, including from the sacrifice at an idol's temple, it is simply meat. If the eating of the meat (comparable to the taking of the bread) resulted in our being united to the idol, then we couldn't follow through with Paul's instruction. However, meat is meat and bread is bread. The eating of either doesn't result in our being united to the idol (meat) or united to Christ (bread).

Rather, it is the participation in the ceremony which others would see and thus identify us with the entity represented by the sacrifice, whether we actually were or not. Therefore, as perception is important for conscience' sake, we are to keep our conscience clear and at the same time we are to not negatively affect others' conscience through our actions. Understanding this, Paul continues with his thought by saying about our meat-shopping experience, "asking no questions for conscience' sake."

If we ask questions about the meat, what will the result be? If it was first sacrificed to an idol and that knowledge was passed on to us, it would then become a point of conscience, not merely of eating. But what if it wasn't sacrificed to an idol? It would make no difference at all. And so we see that either way by not asking then no matter of conscience is connected to the meat. The meat doesn't change by the sacrifice; the meat in relation to us changes by the conscience (perception) of what the sacrifice means.

In this, we can see the truth of the statement "Ignorance is bliss." There is no defiling of our conscience by having others assume that we are participating in an idol's sacrifice, and there is no defiling of another's conscience by their assumption that it makes any difference at all to us about where the meat came from.

Life application: When Paul wrote to those in Corinth about buying meat, he said that we should "eat whatever is sold in the meat market." Two obvious points come up which have been shunned by many sects and cults. 1) The meat sold does not in any way adhere to the dietary laws found within the Law of Moses. And so, 2) the *type of meat* also does not in any way adhere to the dietary laws found within the Law of Moses. If your church, pastor, denomination, etc., tells you that you shouldn't eat any type of meat (pork is always a good example), it's time to leave and find a new place to worship. Paul is rather clear here.

**...for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness."** 1 Corinthians 10:26

This completes the thought of the previous verse. Read together, they say, "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for 'the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness.'"

This thought is seen first in Deuteronomy 10:14. It is then repeated twice in the psalms in both Psalm 24:1 and Psalm 50:11. The idea is that there is one Creator and everything stems from His act of creation. Therefore, anything offered to an idol (which is nothing in all the world), isn't changed by that idol. It was an animal created by God and it has been given to man to eat. Only during the time of the law were dietary restrictions imposed on man - for a set purpose and a set time which ended when Christ fulfilled the law.

Now all food is considered clean and acceptable to eat. This is shown to be true in the account recorded in Acts chapter 10 and which is explained throughout the writings of Paul, such as in 1 Timothy 4:4, 5 -

"For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

Therefore, whatever is sold in the meat market is acceptable and may be eaten without regard to conscience. Paul will continue explaining this in the verses ahead and noting the exceptions as he goes.

Life application: The food we eat has been given by God for our sustenance. Whatever you eat, be sure to give a prayer of thanks over it, thus acknowledging that it is Christ who has made it clean. After that, enjoy your meal!

**If any of those who do not believe invites you *to dinner*, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.**

1 Corinthians 10:27

The previous thought that was given concerned buying meat at the market. About this, we learned that we could "eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake." When something looks tasty there at the meat market, we should feel no constraints on buying it and enjoying it. The next line of thought concerns an invitation to dinner by a non-believer. The assumption is that this is speaking of a private house or maybe an invite out to dinner at a restaurant, not an idol's temple (which has already been addressed).

If a non-believer invites us out in such a manner, and if we desire to go, then we are given complete freedom to do so. There is nothing that would forbid a Christian from going out for a meal with a non-believer. While out, we are also given the freedom to "eat whatever is set before you." It doesn't matter what has been prepared - all foods are acceptable to be eaten and none are considered "unclean" in and of themselves. This is so plainly clear and explicit that only an intentional twisting of Scripture can come to any other conclusion. But Paul adds on a restriction to the meal. We are to ask "no question for conscience' sake." He will explain what this means in the coming verse.



Having noted this, commentators have attempted to insert personal opinions which do not align with Paul's words here. A couple should be highlighted. Some say that the thought "and you desire to go" is an insert which indicates that Paul was somehow implying that it wasn't a smart choice, but that it is allowable none-the-less. This requires inserting a presupposition which is not supported by the entire context of the passage. Going back as far as 1 Corinthians 5, we read this -

"I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.  
<sup>10</sup> Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup> But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person." 1 Corinthians 5:9-11

There is absolutely nothing wrong with associating with the unsaved and Paul makes that perfectly clear. A second thought concerning the verse we are analyzing is that of drinking. Some commentators state that because Paul says "eat whatever is set before you," but fails to mention the word "drink" it implies that Paul was a teetotaler and was indicating that the Christian should not consider imbibing if so offered. This is a complete misuse of Scripture based on a faulty presupposition. Paul has been addressing meats sacrificed to idols and he is continuing along with that thought. "Eating" a meal implies all that the meal includes.

If one doesn't drink alcohol, then they may refuse what is offered. If one does, there is nothing in Scripture to forbid partaking along with the host. Presuppositions inevitably lead to faulty doctrine and bad analyses of Scripture. It is inappropriate to use personal standards against others when providing Scriptural interpretation. This has nothing to do with "promoting" the drinking of alcohol. Rather, it has to do with promoting a sound interpretation which is consistent with Scripture.

Life application: Presuppositions need to be set aside when analyzing Scripture. If one doesn't eat certain meats, that is no excuse for imposing that standard on another. If one doesn't drink alcohol, that is no excuse for attempting to shame others into not drinking it. It is Scripture, given by God, from which we are to derive our doctrine.

**But if anyone says to you, “This was offered to idols,” do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience’ sake; for “the earth *is* the LORD’s, and all its fullness.”** 1 Corinthians 10:28

Paul just got done telling the Corinthians that if they were invited to a meal by a non-believer and wanted to go, that they should feel free to eat anything set before them and to not ask questions about it. It is merely food and it is to be received as such. However, he now qualifies that, beginning with the word "but." This is to show that there are exceptions to how we conduct ourselves. And so he begins with "But if anyone says to you..." Most scholars interpret this to be speaking of a weak Christian who is making the statement. That could be true, but the speaker isn't identified and if he is just any attendee at the meal, then how could this be known?

Instead, it could be anyone at the meal, the host, a family member, a servant, or another Christian. The passage is left vague enough to show us that regardless of who speaks, the principle he will convey will remain true. And so, if such a person says, "This was offered to idols," then Paul's instructions are "do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake."

What this means is that the person who speaks, be it the host or a weak Christian or anyone else, may be harmed by your consumption of the food. If it is a non-believer, they may feel that to you Jesus must be just another "god." They will not come to understand your conviction that Jesus is truly Lord of all. If it is a weak believer, then their conscience toward Christ may also be harmed. They may question how the Lord, upon whom they called, is to be considered on par with the idol to whom the meat was sacrificed. Remember from earlier in chapter 10

that this is what Paul was referring to. People are associated with the idol when they participate in the sacrifice of the idol.

Because of this perception, we are not to eat meat which has been so identified "for conscience' sake." Paul will show in the coming verse that that he is not worried about the conscience of the well-grounded believer, but of someone who doesn't understand our freedom in Christ. In advance of that, he reaffirms that "the earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fullness." This is an undeniable truth that the well-grounded believer can attest to. Because of this, his conscience is undefiled by what he eats. However, his actions in the eyes of others may be misunderstood.

Life application: If you understand that Christ alone is Lord, then you have the freedom to enjoy the world which He is Lord of. But such freedom comes with responsibility towards others who may be weak in their faith. It is not acceptable to exercise your freedoms while harming others in the process.

**"Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another *man's* conscience? 1 Corinthians 10:29**

In the previous two verses, we were instructed that if we are invited to dinner, we can eat whatever is set before us, asking no question about it for conscience' sake. However, if someone were to say that the food was sacrificed to an idol, then we shouldn't eat it, again for conscience' sake. In this verse Paul explains that by saying "'Conscience,' I say, not your own but that of the other."

He has gone to great lengths to show that an idol is nothing and therefore it can have no effect on the food we eat. The meat doesn't magically transfer into something else, nor is there anything which adheres to the meat which would cause us to somehow become defiled. It is meat and nothing more. Therefore, with this knowledge, our conscience should never be affected by what we consume. However, the conscience of others may be affected.

If we eat meat that has been openly acknowledged as having been sacrificed to an idol, then those who know that we are Christians might think we are condoning the practice of sacrificing to an idol. Thus, their conscience will be defiled.

Whether they are non-believers or weak believers, the result will be a defiling of the truth of Christ in their minds. This is what Paul is conveying.

And to complete this verse he says, "For why is my liberty judged by another *man's* conscience?" He states this to show why it is not for our conscience's sake but for the sake of the other's conscience. We have full liberty in Christ because Christ is Lord. The earth is His and from Him came all things. Those who are strong in their faith know this and therefore their conscience will not be defiled by the knowledge that the food they are eating was sacrificed to idols. We also know that another man's weak conscience or unclear thinking on an issue is not the source for judging our liberties in Christ. Rather, our superior knowledge should be the basis of our actions towards them.

Just because someone thinks we are doing something wrong has no bearing on whether we are actually doing something wrong. We are accountable to Christ alone and not to the conscience of another. As we know this, then we should be willing to sacrifice our liberties for the sake of another who doesn't know these things.

Life application: Once again, Paul shows that there are no foods which are unclean to the Christian. The issue of what is physically healthy isn't addressed by the Bible. The issue of what is morally acceptable is, and all foods are morally acceptable. However, there is the issue of the conscience of others. If our liberties cause them a moral dilemma, then we need to refrain from engaging in them until our position is explained and understood.