

1 Corinthians 10:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

Analysis

If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake— Paul addresses dinner invitations from **them that believe not** (apistos, ἀπιστος, "unbelievers"). Unlike temple banquets (explicitly prohibited, v. 14-22), private meals in pagan homes are permissible **if ye be disposed to go** (ei thelei hymas, εἰ θέλει ὑμᾶς, "if you wish"). Paul permits but doesn't require accepting such invitations—it's a matter of personal judgment.

The instruction **whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question** parallels v. 25's market principle. Don't interrogate your host about food origins or preparation. This maintains social courtesy while avoiding unnecessary offense. If you don't know the food's background, your conscience isn't implicated. Eat with thanksgiving, recognizing God's ownership (v. 26) without creating awkwardness through investigation.

This permission demonstrates Paul's missionary pragmatism. Accepting social invitations from pagans creates opportunities for gospel witness and incarnational presence in unbelieving culture. Refusing all such contact would create inappropriate separation (5:9-10). The boundary isn't all social contact with unbelievers but contexts explicitly dedicated to false worship (temple banquets). Private dinners are acceptable provided they don't compromise conscience or witness.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman society operated through patronage networks and social reciprocity. Accepting dinner invitations built relationships and facilitated business. Refusing would seem antisocial and hinder gospel access. Paul's permission balanced cultural engagement with spiritual integrity—Christians could accept hospitality from pagans without participating in explicitly idolatrous contexts. This missionary strategy required discernment but allowed incarnational witness.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How can you cultivate relationships with unbelievers that create gospel opportunities without compromising spiritual integrity?
2. What principles should guide your decisions about which social invitations to accept or decline?
3. In what ways might unnecessary scrupulosity about minor issues hinder your witness to unbelievers?

Interlinear Text

εἰ δέ τις καλεῖ ὑμᾶς τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ
G1487 G1161 G5100 **bid** **you** G3588 **of them that believe not** **to a feast and**
G2564 G5209 G3588 G571 G2532

θέλετε πορεύεσθαι πᾶν τὸ παρατιθέμενον ὑμῖν
ye be disposed **to go** **whatsoever** G3588 **is set before** **you**
G2309 G4198 G3956 G3908 G5213

ἐσθίετε μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν
eat **no** **question** **for** G3588 **conscience**
G2068 G3367 G350 G1223 G4893

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 10:25 (Kingdom): Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

2 Corinthians 5:11 (Faith): Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

2 Corinthians 4:2 (Kingdom): But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 1:13 (Faith): For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

Luke 19:7 (Parallel theme): And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

Luke 15:23 (Parallel theme): And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: