

1 Corinthians 10:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

Analysis

But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof—Paul introduces a qualification to v. 27's permission. If someone at the meal explicitly identifies food as **offered in sacrifice unto idols** (hierothyton, *ἱερόθυτον*, "temple-sacrificed"), then **eat not**. The reason isn't that the food itself becomes defiled but consideration for **his sake that shewed it** (*δι' εκείνον τὸν μηνύσαντα*, *δι' ἐκεῖνον τὸν μηνύσαντα*, "on account of the one who informed you").

Who is this informer? Either

1. a weaker Christian whose conscience would be violated seeing you eat known idol-food, or
2. a pagan host deliberately framing the meal as religious, testing your allegiance.

In either case, abstaining is required—with the Christian, to avoid wounding conscience (8:9-13); with the pagan, to maintain clear witness that you worship only Christ, not idols. Knowledge changes obligation: what was permissible in ignorance becomes wrong when idol-association is explicit.

For conscience sake refers to the other person's conscience (clarified in v. 29), not your own. Your conscience can handle eating (knowing idols are nothing), but

love constrains liberty to protect another's weaker conscience or clarify witness to pagans. The final clause **for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof** (absent in some manuscripts) reaffirms that abstaining isn't due to food's defilement but relational wisdom.

Historical Context

This scenario likely occurred frequently in Corinth—Christians attending social dinners where food origins became explicit through conversation. Paul's instruction navigates complex social dynamics: maintain relationships with pagans, accept hospitality, but draw clear boundaries when explicit idol-association arises. This requires situational discernment rather than rigid rules, using love and witness concerns to guide decisions.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How can you discern when accepting an invitation would compromise witness versus when declining would appear self-righteous?
2. In what situations should you limit your freedoms to avoid confusing or harming others' consciences?
3. How does the principle of abstaining "for his sake that shewed it" apply to modern ethical dilemmas involving disputed practices?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν	δέ	τις	ὑμῖν	εἴπῃ	Τοῦτο	εἰδωλόθυτόν		
if	But	any man	unto you	say	This	offered in sacrifice unto idols		
G1437	G1161	G5100	G5213	G2036	G5124			G1494
ἐστιν	μὴ	ἐσθίετε	δι'	ἐκεῖνον	τὸν	μηνύσαντα	καὶ	τὴν
is	not	eat	for	his sake	G3588	that shewed it	and	G3588
G2076	G3361	G2068	G1223	G1565		G3377		G2532
συνείδησιν·		τοῦ	γὰρ	κυρίου	ἢ	γῆ	καὶ	τὸ
for conscience sake		G3588	for	is the Lord's	G3588	the earth	and	G3588
G4893			G1063	G2962		G1093		G2532
πλήρωμα	αὐτῆς							
the fulness	thereof							
G4138	G846							

Additional Cross-References

Romans 14:15 (Parallel theme): But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Psalms 24:1 (References Lord): The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Psalms 115:16 (References Lord): The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

1 Corinthians 8:7 (Parallel theme): Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

1 Corinthians 10:26 (References Lord): For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.