

19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

10:19 Paul directs his audience, “What am I saying then—that an idol sacrifice is anything, or that an idol is anything?” (TLV). Previously, Paul had to address the Corinthian slogan(s), “Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that ‘an idol has no real existence,’ and that ‘there is no God but one’” (8:4, RSV). The One God of Israel, manifested in the Father as God and the Son as Lord (8:5-6, cf. Deuteronomy 6:4), is supreme. Paul is in agreement how idols are vain nothings, as the Tanach affirms. That does not mean, however, that even though idols are vain nothings, that they do not bear some significance to those who worship them, or eat of the sacrifices made to them.

The people who would have participated, in the animal sacrifices of the Temple in Jerusalem (v. 18), were persons who participated in useful, edifying exercises intending to honor God in some way. What of those who participated in sacrifices made to idols? While an idol may be made of gold, silver, stone, or wood—there is a definite spiritual presence that sits behind an idol—and those who participate in its veneration associate themselves with Satanic demons. Fee’s observations are quite accurate:

“[A]n idol has no reality, in the sense that an idol does not in fact represent what might truly be called a ‘god.’ But what the Corinthians have failed to discern right along is that to say an idol is not a god does not mean that it does not represent supernatural powers. Indeed, it is quite the opposite...”⁵⁹

10:20 Paul testifies “that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons” (NASU). V. 20 actually includes a Greek textual variant of importance, as the canonical *ha thuousin, daimoniois kai ou Theō [thousin]* (ἃ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ [θύουσιν]) actually reads, “that what they sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God” (HCSB). Most modern Bibles (RSV, NASU, NRSV, ESV, CJB, TLV) follow the textual variant *ha thousin ta ethnē* (ἃ θύουσιν τὰ ἔθνη), an ancient gloss intended to clarify that the sacrifices of the Jerusalem Temple are not somehow being referred to (v. 18). Still, there is discussion as to whether this variant is appropriate. As Philip W. Comfort summarizes in his *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*,

“The difference among the variants pertains to the inclusion or exclusion of τὰ ἔθνη (‘the Gentiles/the pagans’). Most likely it was added to clarify that it was not ‘Israel’ that Paul was speaking about (10:18), but that he had shifted to a new subject—the Gentiles. Had τὰ ἔθνη (‘the Gentiles’) been original, there is no good reason why it would have been deleted. Most English versions reflect the variant because they add the subject for the sake of clarity.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Fee, 471.

⁶⁰ Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, 508.

While there are many who prefer the reading “that what the pagans sacrifice,” there are various examiners⁶¹ who see no need for this gloss in a modern translation, and instead think that Deuteronomy 32:17 is being quoted: “They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new *gods* who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread.” In the translation offered in his commentary, Thiselton renders v. 20 as, “Not that! But that when they sacrifice, ‘they offer sacrifices to demons and not to God’” (*NIGTC*),⁶² separating out Deuteronomy 32:17 as a quote. The challenge, of course, is how Deuteronomy 32:17 does notably speak of Israel in rebellion against the Lord, and not the pagans or nations at large worshipping and sacrificing to idols, and the demonic powers behind them.

There are others, such as Ciampa and Rosner, who see the gloss as “an accurate interpretation of Paul’s meaning,”⁶³ and Messianic versions like the CJB and TLV read concurrent with this:

“No, what I am saying is that the things which pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice not to God but to demons; and I don't want you to become sharers of the demons!” (CJB).

“No, I’m saying that what the pagans sacrifice is to demons and not to God, and I don’t want you to become partners with demons” (TLV).

Paul is very concerned that the Corinthians never become *koinōnous tōn daimoniōn* (κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων), “participants with demons” (NIV) or “partakers with devils” (Wesley New Testament). Much of the result of participating in idolatry is seen in his later correspondence, as he would emote, “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4). More immediate to be considered is how Paul has just addressed how those who join in sexual intercourse with a prostitute, are joined to a prostitute (6:15-17), and those who try to share their spiritual actions with both the God of Israel and other gods/goddesses/demons, are committing infidelity against Him. Certainly there are scenes, to be considered from Ancient Israel, where participating in idolatry and feasting invoked dark spiritual powers and enraged the Lord against His own (Deuteronomy 32:16-21; Psalm 106:28; cf. Baruch 4:7; Revelation 9:20).

10:21-22 The Apostle Paul is insistent about the loyalty of the Corinthians to the One True God, in the strong assertion, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (v. 21), as there can be no participation in open idolatry at a temple or shrine, such as was previously addressed in 1 Corinthians ch. 8. The Message paraphrase of v. 21 is actually fairly appropriate: “you can’t have it both ways, banqueting with the Master one day and slumming with demons the next.”

The Apostolic decree of Acts 15:19-21, 29 forbade the new, non-Jewish Believers from participating in idolatrous activities, and the Apostle Paul has just told the Corinthians why it

⁶¹ Thiselton, 775; Garland, 481.

⁶² Thiselton, 750.

⁶³ Ciampa and Rosner, 479.

is unacceptable. He has referenced the infamous scene of the golden calf (v. 7; cf. Exodus 32:4), as well as the Numbers 25 encounter of the Moabite prostitutes brought in by Balaam and consequent slaughter of the offenders (v. 8). The blight upon much of Greco-Roman paganism was worship of idols associated with gross sexual immorality. While some of the Corinthian “Believers” were **most unfortunately** involving themselves in these activities, others had probably just looked at them from a distance, perhaps feeling a pull from various family members and friends who did not recognize Yeshua.

The thrust of the Apostolic decree was that the new, non-Jewish Believers did not have to have the Torah’s Instruction forced upon them; it was, rather, to see them severed from their old spheres of pagan social and religious influence, hence making them attach to a new social and religious community, where Moses’ Teaching was being declared every week. Yet as Acts 18 testifies, the Messiah followers in Corinth were driven out of the Corinthian synagogue, and this certainly affected what they thought they could, and could not, do. *Could they be involved in some extra-God-of-Israel activities, at least from time to time?* Hence, Paul will have to address the Corinthian slogan, “All things are permitted,” yet again (v. 23).

When those who profess exclusive loyalty to the One True God, begin to demonstrate anything but this, all they can do is provoke Him to anger. Specifically, Paul inquires, “Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?” (v. 22, TLV). As is witnessed throughout the record of the Tanach, the jealousy of the Lord toward His own is frequently aroused by idolatry committed against Him (Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 6:14-15; Joshua 24:19-20; 1 Kings 14:22-23; Ezekiel 8:3; Nahum 1:2; Zephaniah 1:18; Psalm 78:58). **This is very serious for Paul.** “Are we trying to arouse the Lord’s jealousy? Are we stronger than he?” (NIV). Of course, limited human mortals are not stronger than the Creator, and if they are unfaithful toward Him, then severe consequences will ensue. Prior astutely observes,

“Paul clearly believes in the reality of an unseen spirit-world, that idolatry is not just meaningless but positively evil. It is evil because it robs the true God of the glory due to him, and because such actions bring people not simply into contact with lower spiritual powers, but actually into subjection to them.”⁶⁴

Certainly, the importance of the Lord, being a jealous God from the Tanach, and the Corinthians avoiding the mistakes of those in Ancient Israel, is present in Paul’s remarks—the exclusive loyalty that Messiah followers were to demonstrate to the God of Israel, and how vital this was in light of the surrounding Greco-Roman polytheism, has to be recognized. Hays’ summary on how subversive the Jewish people and later followers of Israel’s Messiah were, to the paganism surrounding them, is important to consider:

“Here the radically *exclusive* character of Israel’s monotheistic faith becomes clear. In the ancient Mediterranean world, it was thoroughly commonplace to worship various gods and goddesses. Participating in cultic rites for one deity did not by any means preclude participating with equal piety in rites for another; the pantheon was infinitely inclusive. Indeed, it was probably a good bet to worship several gods as a way of diversifying one’s

⁶⁴ Prior, 175.

spiritual investments. The God of Israel, however, would tolerate none of this. Jews—and, later, Christians—puzzled and outraged their pagan neighbors by refusing, even for the sake of appearances, to venerate any God but one. The ‘knowing’ Corinthians were seeking to work out some sort of ‘sensible’ compromise on this matter, but Paul would have none of it.”⁶⁵

23 All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.

10:23-24 1 Corinthians 10:23 repeats the slogan “Everything is permissible” (NIV) or *Panta exestin* (Πάντα ἔξεστιν), which Paul has refuted earlier in 1 Corinthians 6:11, chastising various Corinthians for thinking that they could get away with certain sinful activities, which he has said is something not at all profitable or useful. Later on in this letter, more has to be communicated, and it surely behooves a responsible Bible reader to view v. 23 in light of the wider context of 1 Corinthians 10.

The errant Corinthian slogan *Panta exestin* or “Everything is permitted” (TLV) could very well have been a statement hijacked from Paul’s teaching to them, where he could have taught something like, “Many things are permitted...” What Paul will further address in vs. 25-33 involve a hypothetical invitation to the home of a non-Believer to share a meal, which would serve as an explanation regarding the responsible usage of a born again Believer’s freedom or liberty, in the edification of another. To a figure like the Apostle Paul, many things are indeed permitted, which would have gone against various facets of his contemporary Jewish upbringing, or even various *halachic* norms—but things permitted in light of the overwhelmingly overriding nature of the good news. As Morris puts it,

“Christian liberty is important, but there are some things that are not wise. They neither build the believer up in the faith, nor help other people...It is more important to avoid such actions than to assert one’s rights.”⁶⁶

The slogan *Panta exestin* or “We are free to do anything” (NEB) once again has to be responded to by Paul, and could certainly have affected the thinking of many, as the lure of one’s previous lifestyle in paganism was still present. As he counters this statement in v. 23 (NIV),

THE CORINTHIANS	THE APOSTLE PAUL
“Everything is permissible”	— but <i>not everything is beneficial.</i>
“Everything is permissible”	— but <i>not everything is constructive.</i>

⁶⁵ Hays, 170.

⁶⁶ Morris, 146.

While Paul has just upheld the authority of Israel's Scriptures for the instruction of born again Believers (vs. 1-13)—referencing examples of idolatry and sexual immorality—he still has to refute what various Corinthians have been saying. The statement, of 1 Corinthians 10:23a, is practically identical to what was asserted earlier in 1 Corinthians 6:12a, with Paul's response being *all' ou panta sumpherei* (ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα συμφέρει), "but not all things are helpful" (RSV). Repeating the slogan in 1 Corinthians 10:23b, Paul responds to "Everything is permissible" (NIV) with, *ou panta oikodomei* (οὐ πάντα οἰκοδομεῖ), "but not all things edify" (NASU). In this second response, the verb *oikodomeō* (οἰκοδομέω) is employed, mainly pertaining "to construct in a transcendent sense" or "to help improve ability to function in living responsibly and effectively, *strengthen, build up, make more able*" (BDAG).⁶⁷ It should also key us into Yeshua's mission of coming to restore Israel (Matthew 16:18; cf. Jeremiah 33:7, LXX),⁶⁸ but as Thiselton indicates, "**building up** presupposes the logical grammar of **building the community**."⁶⁹ The edification of the faith community is a theme witnessed throughout Paul's letters (14:3-5, 12, 17, 26; Romans 14:19; 15:2; 2 Corinthians 12:19; 13:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

The Corinthians have been saying "Everything is permissible" (NIV), but it is quite obvious that not all things are at all edifying or "constructive" (NIV) for the Body of Messiah and its mission in the Earth. As Garland describes, "Paul's command that one 'not seek that which is one's own' leaves indefinite what they are not to seek. We can fill in the blank with words such as 'advantage,' 'interest,' 'good,' 'ends,' 'enjoyment,' 'needs.'"⁷⁰

When people think that they are free to do whatever they want (as these Corinthians were), challenging such views frequently has to be done on logical grounds and not just Scriptural grounds. Paul does not agree that "Everything is permissible" (v. 23, NIV), because most frequently what people think that they can get away with will be to the detriment of Body of Messiah. Paul is quick to assert, "Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor" (v. 24), a definite application of the Torah's requirement to love neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). Does the Corinthians' behavior help the Body of Messiah and its purposes, much less outsiders to the faith who need to see the power of the One God of Israel operating through them? Witherington's comments are useful to consider here:

"Paul once again reports the Corinthians' inevitable response to his argument: 'Everything is permitted' (v. 23). But not everything is useful or profitable or builds up the body of Christ, and in a deliberative argument it is critical to stress what is beneficial or advantageous. The Christian is one who does not seek his or her own advantage but rather that of others."⁷¹

⁶⁷ BDAG, 696.

⁶⁸ Consult the author's article "When Did 'the Church' Begin?" (appearing in *Introduction to Things Messianic*).

⁶⁹ Thiselton, 781; also Ciampa and Rosner, 485.

⁷⁰ Garland, 488.

⁷¹ Witherington, 226.

25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; 26 FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS [Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 89:11]. 27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake. 28 But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; 29 I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?

10:25-26 With Paul having just asserted that Believers need to be highly concerned with the spiritual edification of others, what follows in 1 Corinthians 10:25-33 is a potential application of this for the Corinthians themselves. This section is admittedly difficult for many of today's Messianics, who believe in the continued validity of the kosher dietary laws, to understand and deduce possible Twenty-First Century applications for. In fact, those who are highly *or* even hyper-sensitive about what they eat, frequently ignore this section of Paul's letter, and may even at times cast doubt on what Paul has to say.

Has the Apostle Paul cast aside the commandments of *kashrut* and/or the Apostolic decree by writing, "Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS [Psalm 24:1]" (vs. 25-26)? Many readers take this statement as meaning that, at the very least, Paul considers the kosher dietary laws to be a matter of *adiaphora*, something that really does not matter the way one views it, one way or another.

The *makellon* (μάκελλον) is noted by *Thayer* to actually be "a Latin word, *macellum*...a place where meat and other articles of food are sold, *meat-market, provision-market*."⁷² A customary view of "Eat anything sold in the meat market..." (NIV) present in evangelical Christianity, is that the Corinthians were permitted to eat anything being sold in a public place, because if the meat had once been sacrificed to idols, any religious significance had apparently been lost by it ending up in a commercial venue.⁷³ It is not difficult to find commentators who conclude that Paul's statement is apparently reflective of him believing that the kosher dietary laws have been abrogated. As is frequently seen, among a selection of interpreters:

F.F. Bruce: "that Paul should give Christians *carte blanche* to **eat whatever is sold** in a pagan market shows how completely emancipated he was from Jewish obligations in the matter of food and how loosely he sat to the food-restrictions of the Jerusalem decree."⁷⁴

Richard B. Hays: "Presumably the weak at Corinth were arguing for the position almost universally held elsewhere in orthodox Christianity and in Judaism: such meat was still idol

⁷² *Thayer*, 386.

⁷³ Cf. *Garland*, 492.

⁷⁴ *Bruce*, 98.

meat, and it must be forbidden. At this point, however, Paul emphatically declares his agreement with the strong: you can eat anything sold in the market."⁷⁵

Ben Witherington III: "He no longer felt it necessary to keep kosher since all creatures and thus all meat are the Lord's and thus one may freely share in it."⁷⁶

Christian readers have customarily read v. 25 as the Apostle Paul, for certain, giving permission to the Corinthians to purchase meat that had been butchered in the pagan marketplace, regardless of whether or not it had been sacrificed to idols. In the Mishnah, one notably sees the ancient Jewish view that meat brought into an idol, presumably before an animal would have been sacrificed, would have been acceptable for eating if taken away before its death and slaughtered elsewhere. Yet, the meat that comes out of a pagan sacrifice is prohibited. It is stated, "'Meat which is being brought into an idol is permitted. But that which comes out is prohibited, because it is like *sacrifices of the dead* (Ps. 106:28),' the words of R. Aqiba" (m.*Avodah Zarah* 2:3).⁷⁷ Regardless of the prior circumstances, which saw the meat arrive in the Corinthian marketplace, Paul is pushing things by stating, "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market..." (CJB). Noting the widespread Jewish position on meat sacrificed to idols, the thought of Fee is that,

"Paul takes a decidedly 'liberal' stance on this issue. If the Jewish law allowed one to eat meat *before* it was offered to idols but not afterward, Paul contended that its ultimate source was God himself (v. 26) and that it was therefore irrelevant whether it had been sacrificed or not....Thus he tells the Corinthians, to 'buy and eat' and to do 'without raising questions of conscience.' Apparently it was possible in some cases, indeed it was required of the Jews, to investigate whether the meat in the *macellum* had been previously sacrificed; so Paul is telling the Corinthians not to conduct such inquiries. Meat is meat; buy and eat."⁷⁸

From this common conclusion, the issue of concern is necessarily raised, regarding how the Apostolic decree forbade the non-Jewish Believers from eating things strangled and blood, and from idolatry. Does this now no longer matter?

On the one hand, it could possibly be argued that if in a metropolitan area like Ancient Corinth there were ever significant food shortages—that eating whatever was sold in the meat market was preferable to starving.⁷⁹ This would fit with the ancient Jewish principle of *Pikku'ach Nefesh* or regard for human life, where unclean things could be consumed in order to maintain or extend life. Ciampa and Rosner at least interject the thought, "To ask questions and refuse to eat food which is explicitly identified as idol food would seriously reduce the food options available."⁸⁰ That there could be extenuating circumstances which might require the Corinthians to eat unacceptable meat, does need to be recognized.

⁷⁵ Hays, 175.

⁷⁶ Witherington, 227.

⁷⁷ Neusner, *Mishnah*, 663.

⁷⁸ Fee, 481.

⁷⁹ Cf. Thiselton, 783 on "food shortages."

⁸⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, pp 487-488.

It also needs to be recognized that while there was a high possibility of meat being sold in the *macellum* of originating from animals once offered in pagan sacrifice, that this did not have to be the case of all meat. In his commentary, Thiselton makes note of a study by M. Isenberg, who “argues on the basis of a first century text, *Vita Aesopi*, that sacrificial and nonsacrificial meats were readily distinguishable, since the sacrificial meat would be valued more highly.”⁸¹ In the later period of the Second Century C.E., Pliny the Younger, does at least provide a clue that meat offered in sacrifice, and meat that had not been involved in religious rites, was sold together in the market, and both were identifiable as such:

“It is any rate certain that temples which were almost abandoned have begun to be crowded, and the solemn rites which for long had been suspended are being restored. The flesh of the victims, for which up to now only a very occasional buyer was found, is now on sale in many places” (Pliny *Letter to Trajan* 10.96.10).⁸²

Because most of the emerging Christian community in the Roman Empire, would not purchase meat involved in idol sacrifices, apparently merchants selling meat needed to provide an alternative. Tertullian would state, “How in all the world can that be the case with people who are living among you, eating the same food, wearing the same attire, having the same habits, under the same necessities of existence?” (*Apologetic* 42).⁸³ If these Believers would be making use of the same basic marketplace as non-Believers, then this can be taken as an indication that non-idol meat was available in many places of commerce.⁸⁴

Of course, these factors cannot be held rigidly, but do need to be taken into consideration. Not all meat in the Corinthian marketplace of v. 25 had to be tainted by idolatry.

One has to assume when encountering v. 25, though, that the considerable bulk of the meat in the Corinthian marketplace had probably been involved with idolatry. So is it accurate to assume, for the Corinthian Believers, as Fee would say, “Meat is meat; buy and eat”?⁸⁵ The argument that the Corinthians were to “buy and eat” whatever they pleased is one which has been eisegeted into the text. The clause *Pan to en makellō pōloumenon* (Πάν τὸ ἐν μακέλλῳ πωλούμενον) notably includes the present passive participle *pōloumenon*,⁸⁶ and is better rendered with “Eat everything **being sold** in a meat market...” (LITV), with the passive voice “being sold” also represented by the Brown and Comfort⁸⁷ and Marshall⁸⁸ interlinear editions.

The Apostle Paul does not say in v. 25, “Purchase and eat anything being sold in the meat market”; his instruction is only to eat what is being sold. And, in light of accepting or not accepting the invitation of a Corinthian non-Believer (v. 27a), are the Corinthian Believers

⁸¹ Thiselton, 783.

⁸² Pliny the Younger: *Pliny the Younger: Complete Letters*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 296.

⁸³ BibleWorks 9.0: Schaff, Early Church Fathers.

⁸⁴ Garland, 491.

⁸⁵ Fee, 481.

⁸⁶ The verb *pōleō* (πωλέω) means “to exchange or barter goods, to sell or offer for sale” (LS, 713).

⁸⁷ Brown and Comfort, 602.

⁸⁸ Marshall, *Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, 505.

even those who would actually be purchasing the meat in view? Thiselton is at least willing to recognize, “Paul is not necessarily addressing only those who make the actual purchases rather than also those for whom others may have made the purchases.”⁸⁹ The Corinthian non-Believers being those who purchase the meat from the marketplace, who then might serve it as hosts, to Believers they have invited into their homes, is probably the better way to take Paul’s word, “Eat anything that is being sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience’ sake” (v. 25, my translation).

The presence of Paul’s quoting Psalm 24:1 in v. 26, “The earth is the LORD’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it,” does beg a number of questions, which tend to be uncomfortable for many kosher-friendly Messianics.

The flesh of the animals being sold is certainly made by the Creator God, and all creatures are inherently “good” to some degree or another. Likewise, the scene of various festal gatherings at the local shrine or pagan temple in Corinth is certainly not in view. Bruce is right to conclude, “Even if the meat did come from a sacrificed animal, they are not going to eat it as part of an idolatrous feast or in company where they risk becoming ‘partners with demons’.”⁹⁰ The challenge is that Psalm 24:1 was often invoked to thank God for one’s food in traditional Jewish blessing, as witnessed in both the Tosefta and Talmud:

“One must not taste anything until he has [first] recited a benediction [over it], as Scripture states, *The earth is the Lord’s and all that it contains* (Ps. 24:1)” (t.*Berachot* 4:1).⁹¹

“Said R. Judah said Samuel, ‘Whoever derives benefit in this world without reciting a blessing is as if he derived benefit from Holy Things that belong to Heaven [and so has committed sacrilege]. ‘For it is said, “The earth belongs to the Lord, and everything that fills it” (Psa. 24: 1)” (b.*Berachot* 35a).⁹²

“For said R. Hiyya bar Abba, ‘One time I was received as a guest in the home of a householder in Laodicea, and they brought before me a table of gold borne by sixteen men; there were sixteen silver chains fixed to it, with plates, goblets, pitchers, and flaxes set thereon, and on it there were all kinds of food, dainties and spices. When they set it down, they cited the verse, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Psa. 24: 1), and when they took it away after the meal they recited, “The heavens are the heavens of the Lord but the earth he has given to the children of men” (Psa. 115:16). I said to him, “My son, through what deeds do you enjoy the merit of enjoying such comfort?” He said to me, “I was a butcher, and out of every fine beast I said, May this be for the Sabbath.” I said to him, ‘Happy are you that you have attained such merit, and blessed is the Omnipresent, who has accorded you such merit” (b.*Shabbat* 119a).⁹³

⁸⁹ Thiselton, 783.

⁹⁰ Bruce, 98.

⁹¹ Tzvee Zahavy, trans., in Neusner, *Tosefta*, 1:21.

⁹² *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Here, given the direction, “Eat everything being sold in a meat market, examining nothing because of conscience” (v. 25, LITV), coupled with the traditional Jewish blessing of Psalm 24:1—should the Corinthians have ever been *served* meat sacrificed to idols, in a particular setting (v. 27), their default action was apparently to just ask God to bless what they were eating, and then consume it. Fee states, “it is hard to imagine anything more un-Jewish in the apostle than this.”⁹⁴ Garland, however, argues that Fee’s statement is exaggerated, urging some temperance in the words. He instead thinks, “It is more accurate to say that he is nowhere more un-Pharisaic, since Pharisees spent considerable effort inquiring into the background and preparation of food.”⁹⁵

10:27 Is the real reason why Paul has just stated to eat whatever is being sold in the meat market (v. 25), so that the Corinthian Believers can disregard the Apostolic decree? Readers who are careful to work through Paul’s correspondence should note the specific conditions which are further stated to be in place, specifically as it concerns accepting an invitation to visit a non-Believer’s home and being served a meal:

“If an unbeliever invites you over and you want to go, eat whatever is set before you, without raising questions of conscience” (TLV).

A commentator like Fee is correct to assert, “Paul has absolutely forbidden attendance at temple meals,” but the scene or venue here is dining “in a pagan home.”⁹⁶ If a non-Believer wants to demonstrate his hospitality to one of the Corinthian Believers—**and it might especially be a chance to testify of Yeshua the Messiah**—then Paul’s instruction is to go and eat what is served. Such Corinthian non-Believers would have been those who frequented the local meat market, purchasing fare to serve their guests that may have come from idolatrous sacrifices. Hays, who does think that the Corinthians can purchase whatever meat they want in the market (v. 25, previously addressed), goes on to connect this with v. 27, detailing, “he tells them they can eat whatever is served to them in the home of an unbeliever without conducting any inquiries about the source of the meat.”⁹⁷ Sampley makes the appropriate linguistic connections between 1 Corinthians 10:25, 27, which serves to support that it is the Corinthian non-Believers, and not the Believers, who purchase what is being sold at the meat market:

“[T]he same wording used in 10:25 (πάν...ἐσθίετε *pan...esthiete*, ‘eat everything’—with the ‘everything’ placed first for emphasis—without any problems for your moral consciousness) urges the believer to feel conscience-free to eat whatever is placed before him or her.”⁹⁸

The *TDNT* entry on *makellon* or “meat market” (v. 25), notably associates what is being sold to the Believer visiting with a pagan:

“This term means ‘enclosure,’ then ‘market.’ Markets are rectangular courts with a dome-shaped roof, a fountain in the middle, booths at the side, and perhaps a room for

⁹⁴ Fee, 482.

⁹⁵ Garland, 490.

⁹⁶ Fee, 483.

⁹⁷ Hays, 176.

⁹⁸ Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:921.

sacrificial repasts. In 1 Cor. 10:25 Paul uses the word when he tells the Christians at Corinth how to act relative to meat sold on the market, which might well come from pagan temples but might also be the only meat readily available. Paul's advice is that one is to eat without asking questions, for everything is the Lord's. Only when unbelievers say that the meat has been offered in pagan sacrifice should one refrain for their sake."⁹⁹

Thiselton properly indicates, "The meat almost certainly *will* be what had been offered in a temple, especially since the host serves good quality fare."¹⁰⁰ But how might it be made known to the Corinthian Believer visiting a pagan home, if the meat had indeed been sacrificed to an idol? There are a number of options, but specifically inquiring of one's host about the meat is not one of them. More than likely, some blessing, accolade, or toast to a pagan deity could have been witnessed during the preparation of the meal, or overheard as the meal was being served (discussed further).¹⁰¹ Enough clues could be dropped regarding the source of meat being offered by one's host.

When one sees Paul's word, "If some unbeliever invites you to a meal, and you want to go, eat whatever is put in front of you without raising questions of conscience" (CJB), there should be little doubting the fact that he is pushing the envelope of much First Century Jewish convention. While Paul is favorable toward Believers accepting an invitation to dine at a non-Believer's private home, many of Paul's Jewish contemporaries would often turn down invitations to eat at a Greek or Roman's home. In the view of Keener, in his *IVPBBC*,

"[When] people were...invited to banquets in wealthy homes...they could not be certain of the meat's source. Jewish people who avoided impure foods (like pork) were virtually excluded from...banquets, but they did not look down on *Gentiles who ate pork as long as they abstained from idols. Jewish people had sometimes faced martyrdom to avoid eating impure foods, and they would expect Gentiles who claimed to believe in God at least to avoid food that had certainly been offered to idols."¹⁰²

Keener's further thought, as seen in his 1&2 Corinthians commentary, is that in accepting an invitation to dine at a non-Believer's home, "What they did not know would not hurt them (10:25, 27); indeed, even scrupulous Jewish teachers considered inadvertent sins comparatively 'light' (although they might not have adopted Paul's 'Don't ask, don't tell' approach)."¹⁰³ Passively eating of meat, that had been involved in idolatry, was a far less crime than murder or fornication, presumably being at the same level such as eating the flesh of an animal that had been mauled (Leviticus 20:22-26), a Torah infraction which did not merit capital punishment. The overriding issue, per the intention of the Apostolic decree of severing the new, non-Jewish Believers from their previous spheres of social and religious influence (Acts 15:19-21), is that interaction with the larger Greco-Roman world **was not going away**, as demonstrated by what to do when invited to a pagan home to eat. Garland does interject, "Paul's advice reveals that he had no intention of cutting [Believers] off entirely

⁹⁹ J. Schneider, "mákelon," in *TDNT*, 549.

¹⁰⁰ Thiselton, 786.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Garland, pp 494-495 for a review of possibilities.

¹⁰² Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 475.

¹⁰³ Keener, 89.

from their pagan family, neighbors, and associates (cf. 5:9-13; cf. Luke 10:8)....Paul does not expect his readers to cut themselves off completely from the fabric of all social relationships."¹⁰⁴ Relationships of some kind have to be established, in order for the good news of Israel's Messiah to be declared and received.

The hypothetical scene of v. 27, "If a pagan asks you to dinner and you want to go..." (Phillips New Testament), goes beyond the Acts 10 encounter of the Apostle Peter having eaten with the centurion Cornelius. The Apostle Paul is detailing the acceptance of an invitation to eat at a pagan home; Cornelius had been a God-fearer, associated to some degree with the Jewish Synagogue, and would not have served meat sacrificed to idols. *What Paul is describing goes beyond the controversy that Peter stirred (Acts 11:1-18) when eating with the uncircumcised.* In the estimation of Morris, "When invited by a pagan a Christian is at liberty to accept, and to eat whatever is provided without asking where it came from. That is his host's business."¹⁰⁵ What can often get overlooked, is how speaking hypothetically, Paul does not require it of the Corinthians to *always accept* an invitation to eat at a pagan home. Noting his view of 9:20-22 preceding, Fee draws the conclusion, "the acceptance of such invitations is perfectly legitimate (another place where he would be treating on sacred Jewish traditions [t.*Avodah Zarah* 4:6]); it depends on whether 'you want to go.'"¹⁰⁶ There would certainly be occasions, if an invitation was issued, where it would not at all be advantageous for a Corinthian Believer to go dine at a non-Believer's home. Yet, unlike many of his Jewish contemporaries, because of the interests of the good news being declared to all, Paul is broadly dismissing sentiments like those of *Jubilees* 22:16:

"And you also, my son, Jacob, remember my words, and keep the commandments of Abraham, your father. Separate yourself from the gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs. Because their deeds are defiled, and all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable."¹⁰⁷

It can at least be recognized how there was a permissive stance in terms of eating meat in the possession of a non-Jew, among some in Paul's contemporary Judaism. As the Tosefta records, "Meat which is found in the possession of a gentile is permitted for gain. [If it is found] in the possession of a *min*, it is prohibited for gain. That which goes forth from a pagan temple, lo, it is deemed to be meat from the sacrifices of corpses" (t.*Chullin* 2:20).¹⁰⁸ Paul sits in a parallel course to this, as Believers may eat from what is served them, not asking about where it came from.

A bigger issue, especially in light of how Paul has just asked his audience whether or not they intend to arouse the Lord to jealousy, is whether or not he was treading on violating the tenor of Exodus 34:15, "otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice." This is where the venue of a private home, and being inadvertently served idol meat at a mealtime, has to be differentiated from going to a local

¹⁰⁴ Garland, 493.

¹⁰⁵ Morris, 146.

¹⁰⁶ Fee, 482.

¹⁰⁷ Wintermute, "Jubilees," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2, 98.

¹⁰⁸ Neusner, *Tosefta*, 2:1379.

temple or shrine, and knowingly partaking of meat that had been sacrificed to an idol. Yet, in v. 27 it may be observed how Paul has pushed the Apostolic decree and Torah prohibitions as far as they can go, without willful and conscious involvement in idolatry being present. In their summary on what is being discussed, Ciampa and Rosner conclude that Paul's approach in accepting an invitation to dine at a non-Believer's home, is consistent with the spirit of the Exodus 34:15 instruction, albeit being to the left of how most of his fellow Jews would have read it:

"Paul's more detailed instructions (vv. 28-30) suggest that he has a simple dinner invitation in mind, and that the believer was to be careful to avoid eating any food that was explicitly identified as having been offered to an idol. This clearly does not follow the Jewish tradition...but may still be understood as a more 'liberal' approach to avoiding association with pagan sacrifices (and thus in the spirit of Exod. 34:15) while still allowing believers to maintain and develop social relationships with their non-believing neighbors."¹⁰⁹

10:28-30 While the Corinthian Believer is not to inquire of the source of the meat, when eating at a pagan home, the source of the meat may very well be publicly stated during the meal. Paul directs, "But if anyone says to you, 'This is from an idol sacrifice,' do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience" (v. 28, TLV). Here, in the words *ean de tis humin eipē* (ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ), *eipē* (εἴπῃ) notably being an aorist active subjunctive, Paul is speaking widely in hypothetical terms. Paul is presenting a scenario where the edification of others and mission of the Body of Messiah are in play. As Witherington concludes, "we have *ean* ('if perhaps') with a subjunctive verb: 'But if perhaps anyone may say...' Here Paul is dealing with a hypothetical possibility, one that his audience has not asked about."¹¹⁰

The Corinthian Believers, as a matter of respect to the host, are simply not supposed to ask about what they are served. While the main issue regarding the source of the meat served would be whether it was sacrificed to idols or not, animals employed in Greco-Roman sacrifice, while involving technically clean animals like cattle, sheep, goats, or various fowl, could notably have also involved unclean animals like swine. Eating what is served before oneself would also pertain to various meat ingredients possibly used in side dishes.

The difficult thing for today's Messianics to consider is that with v. 27 in view, the meat could have been from animals listed as clean *or* unclean on the lists of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, when served to a Corinthian Believer by a local pagan in his home. If served meat that was technically clean or unclean, it was to be eaten; it was not to be refused **unless publicly known to be sacrificed to an idol**. In the event that if a Corinthian Messiah follower went to the home of a pagan friend, or even family member, and discovered out that meat served was presented before idols, then Paul is clear that for conscience's sake he or she was to refuse the meal. Morris draws the interesting conclusion,

¹⁰⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, 490.

¹¹⁰ Witherington, 227.

“This is in sharp contrast to the Jewish approach. Jews were very scrupulous and made searching inquiries before they would eat meat. Paul’s attitude was revolutionary. He took seriously the truth that an idol is nothing...He discouraged over-scrupulousness.”¹¹¹

There was a point, where the presumed “knowledgeable” addressed in ch. 8 would be correct, where the power of the One True God was overwhelmingly superior to any idols, and certainly superior to the flesh of animals created by Him (v. 24), whether clean or unclean. This power did not permit participation and eating in a local temple or shrine. This power may permit eating at the private home of a non-Believer. Yet, while being overly-scrupulous in such a setting was something that Paul discouraged, a Corinthian Believer might have found other ways to eat, especially in thinking how any meat items had likely once been pagan sacrifices. Ciampa and Rosner summarize the possibilities,

“Paul is probably assuming...that the meal (as would be typical) might be one in which many different food choices were being passed around...the Christian would not have to go without food altogether but could choose from those items that had not been explicitly associated with an idol. If the Christian could not simply choose strategically from the food offered at the dinner, they might feel the need from time to time excuse him- or herself from the dinner.”¹¹²

When circumstances arose, where it was public knowledge at the meal that the meat had once been sacrificed to idols, it was to be refused. Paul interjects, though, how it is “not [for] your own conscience, I mean, but [for] the other person’s” (v. 29a, TLV). Some Believers, in finding out that meat served at someone’s private home had been sacrificed to idols, would realize that the God of Israel is all-powerful, and that willful participation in idolatry is not occurring. Yet at the same time, if Messiah followers discover that they are served meat sacrificed to idols, it is to be refused on account of what it communicates to others. Witherington rightly says, “if one would go ahead and eat, then the host would see that as a violation of one’s own religion. It would be a bad witness to that person.”¹¹³ Here, the errant Corinthian slogan in action, “All things are permitted,” could certainly backfire if a Corinthian Believer continued eating once knowledge of where meat originated was stated. Fellowship with the Corinthian non-Believers had some definite risks, as pagans might think that willful participation in *their religion* was occurring on the part of the Believers.

It is not agreed among interpreters how the statements following in vs. 29b-30 should be approached: “For why is my freedom judged by another’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I give thanks for?” (TLV). Surely, if many things, at least, are permitted for Messiah followers, then accepting the hospitality of a Greek or Roman non-Believer to dine, should not be something that one is slandered or condemned for. There is disagreement whether vs. 29b-30 are words that Paul is employing to speak for how he himself has eaten idol meat in a pagan home before, and is having to defend himself, **or** if the “I” being referred to is an emphatic “I” or a usage of impersonation

¹¹¹ Morris, 146.

¹¹² Ciampa and Rosner, pp 491-492.

¹¹³ Witherington, 227.

as a hypothetical “I” (similar to the “I” sinner of Romans 7), *or* even if vs. 29b-30 is a quotation or reference from the Corinthians’ correspondence to Paul.

Garland summarizes his view that the “I” who speaks in vs. 29b-30 is not the Apostle Paul having to defend past actions, but is instead an emphatic usage. Garland does not believe that Paul would have ever knowingly eaten meat sacrificed to idols, and that “I” should not necessarily be thought to refer to Paul directly:

“Some take these questions to reflect Paul’s self-defense of his own past actions, perhaps in Corinth, and claim that he anticipates some Corinthians challenging his own inconsistency in condemning them for eating idol food in temples while he ate the same idol food sold in the meat market...I am convinced that Paul never ate idol food that was known to be idol food and so would have no need to defend himself. Paul may have used the ‘I’ for the sake of vividness when a more universal application is in view...thus presenting himself as a paradigmatic example for his readers.”¹¹⁴

Garland makes reference to Daniel B. Wallace’s massive resource, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, which describes,

“On a rare occasion, the first person singular may be used for the sake of vividness when a more universal application is in view. Normally such a usage is inclusive of the first person (thus, ‘I’ would mean something like ‘all of us’), but apparently it can also be used in an exclusive way (‘I’ would mean ‘others, but not myself’).”¹¹⁵

To an extent, this approach is reflected in the Thiselton rendering, of vs. 29b-30, “For why [you ask] is my freedom being subjected to another person’s self-awareness? Well, if I take part in a meal with thanksgiving, why should I suffer defamation of character over that for which I, at least, give thanks” (*NIGTC*).¹¹⁶

A significant alternative to the “I” of vs. 29b-30, involving some form of impersonization, is to take these statements as being quotations or references to things that the Corinthians have asked of Paul, perhaps even being a continuation of the slogan “All things are permitted” from v. 23. This is the view that Witherington proposes:

“[This] is again the objection of the Corinthians, as in v. 23a, and does not represent Paul’s own view...Paul himself has just argued that he *does* limit his freedom, and the Corinthians ought to limit theirs precisely because of someone’s else’s conscience. Thus v. 30 would also be a further hypothetical rhetorical question from the Corinthians to Paul...Paul’s answer is: because it is not just a matter of one’s relationship with God; it is not purely a vertical matter. There are also the horizontal relationships, that is, the effect one’s eating has on others.”¹¹⁷

Interestingly enough, the renderings seen in the CJB, REB, and the God’s New Covenant edition by Heinz Cassirer, reflects the view that vs. 29b-30 might be correspondence being quoted from Paul:

¹¹⁴ Garland, pp 497-498.

¹¹⁵ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 391.

¹¹⁶ Thiselton, 779.

¹¹⁷ Witherington, 228.

“however, I don't mean your conscience but that of the other person. You say, ‘Why should my freedom be determined by someone else's conscience? If I participate with thankfulness, why am I criticized over something for which I myself bless God?’” (vs. 29-30, CJB).

“not your conscience, I mean, but his. ‘What?’ you say. ‘Is my freedom to be called in question by another’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I blamed for eating food over which I have said grace?’” (vs. 29-30, REB).

“by his own conscience, I mean, not yours. ‘What,’ you say, ‘is my freedom of action to be called in question by another’s conscience? If it is with thanksgiving that I partake of such food, why should I incur reproach over that for which I give thanks?’” (vs. 29-30, God’s New Covenant-Cassirer).

Both the employment of vs. 29b-30 as impersonization via a hypothetical “I,” with Paul addressing why a Believer has to be careful with his or her liberty, or a quotation or reference to what the Corinthians had been communicating to Paul, certainly lessen the potential problems that exist if Paul himself had been blatantly caught violating the principles of the Apostolic decree. Still, even with vs. 29b-30 possibly separated out in English translation in quotation marks “ ”, Paul might have been stating something that was only in the minds of those Corinthians who incorrectly believed “All things are permitted.”

31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the [assembly] of God; 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.

10:31-33 Born again Believers cannot just do anything, as Paul makes it clear, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (v. 31). Living fully for God is the thrust of the Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *Shema*, and as David exclaims in Psalm 63:1, “O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” With *doxan Theou* (δόξαν θεοῦ) in view, there are obviously limits as to how far one can go with fellowshiping or interacting with non-Believers. In many cases, while the invitation to eat at the home of a non-Believer’s table would be good, as one could share the gospel, the chance that it would negatively affect others, could require it to be turned down.

When born again Believers conduct themselves in a manner that brings glory to God, then it is conducted with the prime example of Yeshua the Messiah, particularly as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:11-12), in conscious attention. Eating or drinking or performing any other actions take place, with care for others’ needs and edification being imperative (Romans 15:1-6; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Philippians 2:1-22). Noting the presence of “glory” or *doxa* in v. 31, Thiselton further elaborates,