

would encourage idolatry. Others believed that it was mere flesh, and might be freely purchased. Paul agrees with the second view. *Asking no question for conscience sake*; giving one's conscience no trouble about the matter. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*. See Ps. 24: 1. This text was the usual Jewish "grace before meat." So long as the Christian acknowledges God as the great Giver of all things, he may without sin eat what he pleases.

Vs. 27, 28. *If any . . . that believe not bid you to a feast; in a private house*. Note that Paul assumes the social intercourse of Christians with heathen. Jesus became the Friend of publicans and sinners, to lift them up from their level to His own, while He condemned the aloofness of the Pharisees. *Whatsoever is set before you, eat*. In a non-Christian home sacrificial food was likely to be used, and here the Christian's conduct would be narrowly watched. *Asking no question for conscience sake*; that is, the conscience of another, for he would not be eating the meat as a sacrifice to an idol, and so no one would be led astray by his example. *If any man say*, etc. "The reference is to a Christian fellow-guest at a feast in a heathen home." (Meyer.) He detects by some mark that the meat has been offered in sacrifice, and thinks it wrong therefore to partake of it. He whispers his discovery to others. There are two ways of acting towards this man. One is to go on eating the sacrificial meat; this would encourage him to disobey his conscience. The other is to abstain; this would help him to refrain from doing what he thought wrong. Which way is right? Paul says, *Eat not for his sake*; lest he should be tempted to do what his conscience forbids.

Vs. 29, 30. *Conscience, . . . not thine own. . . the other's* (Rev. Ver.). Two lessons are to be learned. "The first is the sacredness or supremacy of conscience; the second lesson is that we must ever use our Christian liberty with Christian consideration for others." (Expositor's Bible.) Paul has laid down the rule that the Christian should show deference to the conscience of others. In vs. 29b, 30, he justifies this rule, saying in effect, "What is to be gained by my so using my liberty that the conscience of a fellow-Christian will

condemn me; and, why should I, who give thanks to God for my food, so act as to lead others to speak evil of me, supposing that I am giving honor to an idol? Shall my thanksgiving lead to blasphemy ('evil spoken of') on their part?"

III. A Noble Practice, 31-33.

The apostle now points out the two great principles which should guide and control the Christian's conduct: (1) *All to the glory of God*. See Shorter Catechism, Ques. 1. We are to ask ourselves, for example, whether eating meat offered to idols, or in our own day, using strong drink, will help us to bring honor to God. (2) *Give no occasion of stumbling* (Rev. Ver.). We should ask, Is our example a safe one for the weak and tempted to follow? *To the Jews* (still unconverted to Christ). *Gentiles* (heathen). *church of God* (Christian believers). These three classes made up Paul's world of men. *Even as I*. Back of Paul's teaching was his personal example, adding power to his words. *Seeking . . . the profit of many*. Paul, like his Master and ours (Matt. 20: 28), was well content to be a "servant unto all," ch. 10: 19. *That they may be saved*. With Paul, saving men was a passion, Rom. 9: 1-3; 10: 1. If it is so with us, self-denial for others will be easy.

Light from the East

SHAMBLES—Now signifies only a slaughter house; but it formerly meant a bench or stall on which goods and especially meats were exposed for sale, and then it came to mean the flesh market. It is here used to render the provision market of the Greeks and Romans, the open square, frequented by cooks, fishermen, poulterers, and men of similar occupations, for the display and sale of their various wares. In small places the forum was used for this purpose, but as a city grew and better buildings began to surround the market square, provisions were banished from it to some more remote district, and the forum was reserved for public gatherings for municipal and political business, and for the administration of justice. Even then bankers and usurers and the more genteel professions had their places of business round the forum.