Exegeting a Pauline Assessment of Cultural Change:
"Idol Sacrifice" in 1 Corinthians 8–10[1]

A. Philip Brown II, PhD
Bible Faculty Summit
August 5, 2015

Cultures[2] and tides. Their changes range from unnoticed gradations to surging flow and rip-tide ebb. Most don't have Bay-of-Fundy proportions,[3] but recent changes in our culture's mood toward homosexual marriage come close. Tide-like, culture can be ridden to difficult-to-reach locations or it can push us around and carry where we don't want to be— stranded aground in irrelevance, adrift in an unbounded relativism, or awash in the waves of social expectation.

This is true not only in secular culture but also in the church. Evangelical culture has changed dramatically. The last two decades saw prohibitions of dancing and alcohol consumption jettisoned, while global warming-ism and gay marriage were accepted and, in some cases, embraced. Less dramatic, but no less real has been the rise of Christian blockbuster movies (*Facing the Giants, Fireproof*), mobile technology (Got a phablet yet?), and social media adoption (e.g., Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter).

This paper seeks to provide an exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 8-10 as one NT example of how we should evaluate the meaning and morality of a disputed cultural practice.[4] I will argue that at the core of Paul's approach lie the glory of God and the good of others, i.e., love for God and others. Paul uses theological and "sociological" analysis to apply these guiding principles to three issues revolving around "meat offered to idols": eating at a pagan temple (1 Cor. 8:1-3), eating meat from the market (1 Cor. 10:23-26), and eating with unbelievers (1 Cor. 10:27-30).

NT Background and Structural Overview

Before plunging into the intricacies of this extended passage, two wide-angle perspectives are needed. First, approximately five years prior to the writing of this letter, Paul and Barnabas were participants in the Jerusalem Council that determined whether Gentiles were required to be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15). At the conclusion of that council, the apostles unanimously agreed that Gentiles were to "abstain from things sacrificed to idols" (Acts 15:29).[5] Closing the

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[1] This paper was first presented at the 2014 Aldersgate Forum and benefited from its members' engagement.

[2] For the purposes of this paper, by "culture" I mean "the beliefs, values, attitudes, goals, and practices shared by a group of people." See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, et al., *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (Baker Academic, 2007), 21-32, for a helpful discussion of what culture is and what it does.

[3] The average spring tide in the Bay of Fundy, Burntcoat Head, Nova Scotia is 47.5 feet from the low to high tide marks, with extremes of 53.5 feet. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_of_Fundy. Accessed, July 30, 2015.>

[4] For a review of the scholarship on this passage, see E. Coye Still, "The Rationale Behind the Pauline Instructions on Food Offered to Idols: A Study of the Relationship Between 1 Corinthians 4:6-21 and 8:1-11:1" (Ph.D. diss.; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000), 56-94.

[5] The apostle James reiterates this expectation after Paul's letter to the Corinthians in Acts 21:25.

canon around 30-40 years later, Jesus sent messages to the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira that included condemnation of those who "eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 22:14, 20). These texts highlight the importance of the subject Paul is addressing.

Second, catching a view of the large-scale structure of this passage will help us not get lost as we follow Paul's complex argument:

- Chapter 8—Paul calls those with knowledge to love weaker brothers by sacrificing their "right" to eat food in a pagan temple.
- Chapter 9—Paul shows how he has practiced what he just preached. He has sacrificed his rights for the good of others and the progress of the gospel.[6]
- Chapter 10:1-22—Paul rehearses OT history to expose the folly and danger of idolatrous eating.
- Chapter 10:23-11:1—Paul demonstrates how God's glory and other's good serve as criteria for assessing questionable cultural practices.

Dining in a Pagan Temple: Eating Meat or Eating Idol Sacrifice? (1 Cor. 8)

Paul begins his discussion of "food offered to idols" (*eidolothuton*, εἰδωλόθυτον) by addressing objections apparently raised by the Corinthians to the apostolic injunction to abstain.

Knowledge and Love (1 Cor. 8:1-6)

> [1] Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up.
> [2] If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.
> [3] But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.[7]

The phrase "all of us possess knowledge" is widely regarded as a quotation Paul is pulling from the Corinthians' most recent letter to him.[8] Apparently one of the Corinthians' chief claims was that their theological knowledge freed them from pagan superstitions. Paul's counter stroke is forceful: knowledge contributes to pride, but love builds up.

The second verse loses something in translation. "Knows something" would be better translated "has come to know something fully."[9] The point is this: if you think you know all there is to

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[6] David E. Garland, "The Dispute over Food Sacrificed to Idols (1 Cor 8:1-11:1)," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 2 (2003): 173–97; idem, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 347-504. For others who take this position, see Wendel Willis, "An Apostolic Apologia? The Form and Function of 1 Cor. 9," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 33-48; idem, "1 Corinthians 8-10: A Retrospective After Twenty-Five Years." *Restoration Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2007): 105; Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 243-49; Joop F. M. Smit, "The Rhetorical Disposition of First Corinthians 8:7-9:27," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 476-91; Anthony C. Thistelton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 662.

[7] All Scripture text is taken from the ESV.

[8] Garland, BECNT, 364.

[9] The verb ἐγνωκέναι is a perfect active infinitive. Paul's use of an aorist form of the same verb γνῶναι in the next phrase suggests that he is contrasting a claim to comprehensive knowledge (ἐγνωκέναι) with the limited

know about something, it shows that you are yet ignorant of your ignorance. Not only does he prick their pride, but he sets the stage to demonstrate that what really counts is loving God and being known by Him.[10]

After this implicit rebuke, one might expect Paul to move his argument forward by applying the ethic of love to the question at hand. Surprisingly, however, he pauses to acknowledge that what the Corinthians "know" about idols is, in fact, true.

> [4] Therefore, 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."
> [5] For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth-- as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"--
> [6] yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

The Corinthians were right. Thinking through the implications of Deut. 6:4 ("Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is One") and the prophetic denunciations of idolatry's vanity (cf. Isa. 40:20; 44:9, 14-17) had led them to the correct theological conclusions: there is only one God; idols have no real existence.

While they were correct theologically, yet because they were not operating according to love, the "knowers" had drawn the wrong practical conclusions.

The Weak Eat and Are Defiled (1 Cor. 8:7)

> [7] However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

In verse seven Paul points out that despite the claim that "all have knowledge" (8:1), some do not yet understand that idols are nothing and there is only one God. The people Paul has in mind are those whose pagan background still shapes their perception of the world.[11] A more literal translation of verse seven would read,

> "But this knowledge is not in all, but some being accustomed until now to the idol are eating [food] as 'idol sacrifice' and their conscience, being weak, is defiled."

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knowledge possible to finite beings (γνῶναι). Cf. Garland, BECNT, 363, for a similar analysis. The textual variations that occur here all appear in manuscripts dated to the 9th c. AD or later and thus are unlikelv to reflect the original text. The current text has the support of the following mss from the 3rd-5th c. AD: 𝔓15vid 𝔓46 ℵ A B D (CSNTM Database in BibleWorks 9).

[10] The perfect passive ἔγνωσται (8:3) "has been [fully] known" suggests that in contrast to arrogantly claiming to know something fully, they should humbly acknowledge that what is really remarkable about them is that they have been "fully known" by God. He who knows all things has, nonetheless, entered fully into intimate relationship with them.

[11] For an alternate understanding of the weak's identity see, Mark D. Nanos, "The Polytheist Identity of the 'Weak' and Paul's Strategy to 'Gain' Them: A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1," in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 179–210. Paul's concern for causing the weak to stumble and the range of lexical terms used for such stumbling argue against Nanos' identification of the weak as polytheists.

The term "idol sacrifice" (*eidolóthuton*, εἰδωλόθυτον)[12] is a pejorative term apparently coined by the Christian or Jewish community.[13] Greeks did not use the word "idol sacrifice"; they used the term "temple sacrifice" (*hieróthuton*, ἱερόθυτον). "Idol sacrifice" is used in the NT to refer to food which, having been sacrificed to an idol, is eaten with the intent to venerate or worship that false god.

The key to understanding this passage is the phrase "as idol sacrifice." The comparative particle "as" shows that the problem is not the eating of food sacrificed to an idol *per se*.[14] Rather, the problem is one of perspective and intent. New believers, whose past was steeped in idolatry but who lacked proper theological training, saw eating such food as necessarily being an act of idolatry. They could not view such food as neutral. Thus, when they ate it "*as* idol sacrifice," they were, in fact, committing idolatry. As a result, their weak consciences were "defiled."[15]

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[12] The meaning and reference of this word are debated. BDAG, s.v. εἰδωλόθυτος states that it "refers to sacrificial meat, part of which was burned on the altar as the deities' portion, part was eaten at a solemn meal in the temple, and part was sold in the market for home use." BDAG notes that this expression, "idol sacrifice," was "possible only within Israelite tradition, where it was used in a derogatory sense. Polytheists said ἱερόθυτον [temple sacrifice]." What BDAG is missing from its definition is the perspectival/intentional dimension. For food to be εἰδωλόθυτον it has to be eaten *as an act of veneration*. Among the important works on "idol food" are the following: John C. Hurd, *The Origin of I Corinthians* (New York: Seabury, 1965) 240-88; Hans von Soden, "Sacrament and Ethics in Paul," in *The Writings of St. Paul* (ed. W. Meeks; New York: Norton, 1972), 257-68; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Freedom or the Ghetto (1 Cor. viii, 1-13; x, 23 – xi, 1)," *Revue Biblique* 85 (1978) 543-74; Gordon D. Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα Once Again: An Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8-10," *Biblica* 61(1980): 172-97; C. K. Barrett, "Things Sacrificed to Idols," in *Essays on Paul* (London: SPCK, 1982), 40-59; Gerd Theissen, "The Strong and the Weak in Corinth: A Sociological Analysis of a Theological Quarrel," in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (ed. G. Theissen; trans. John H. Schütz [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982]) 121-42; C. K. Barrett, "ΕΙΔΩΛΟΘΥΤΑ Once More," in *Aksum-Thyateira*. *A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britain* (ed. G. D. Draga; London: Thyateira House, 1985) 155-8; Wendell Lee Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* (SBLDS 68; Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985); Bruce N. Fisk, "Eating Meat Offered to Idols: Corinthian Behavior and Pauline Response in 1 Corinthians 8-10 (A Response to Gordon Fee)," *Trinity Journal* 10 (1989) 49-70; Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (CRINT III:1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Peter David Gooch, *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8-10 in Its Contex*t (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 5; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993); Paul D. Gardner, *The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 8-11:1* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1994); and Alex T. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy* (JSNTSup 176; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1999).

I found most helpful the following: Ben Witherington, "Not So Idle Thoughts about Eidolothuton," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44, no. 2 (1993): 237–54; E. Coye Still III, "The Meaning and Uses of EIDŌLOTHYTON in First Century Non-Pauline Literature and 1 Cor 8:1-11:1: Toward Resolution of the Debate," *Trinity Journal* 23, no. 2 (2002): 225–34; idem, "Paul's Aims Regarding Eidōlothyta: A New Proposal for Interpreting 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1," *Novum Testamentum* 44, no. 4 (2002): 333–43.

[13] Εἰδωλόθυτον never occurs before the 1st c. AD, and Acts 15 may reflect its earliest literary use. cf. Still, "The Meaning and Uses," 226. Its occurrences in Jewish literature are limited to 4 Maccabees 5:2, Sibylline Oracles 2:96, and Pseudo-Phocylides 1:31.

[14] τινὲς δὲ τῇ συνηθείᾳ ἕως ἄρτι τοῦ εἰδώλου ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον ἐσθίουσιν ….

[15] Cf. Isa. 59:3; Jer. 23:11; Rev. 3:4 where μολύνω is used in reference to spiritual defilement.

Verse 7 reflects Paul's belief that intention entails moral culpability.[16] If a person believes that an act is wrong, then it is wrong for them, regardless of its inherent morality (Rom. 14:14). The "weak" are people whose consciences have been misinformed and so draw wrong conclusions about the morality of a given practice.

Food and our Spiritual Condition (1 Cor. 8:8)

Returning to the matter of the food itself, Paul argues,

> [8] Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

This is the first time Paul has actually used the word "food" in the passage. But the connective (δὲ) at the beginning of verse 8 suggests that it was the intended object of "eating" in verse seven (i.e., eating [food] as 'idol sacrifice').

Paul seems to be asserting that, since food doesn't "commend" us to God,[17] it has, in itself, no positive or negative spiritual value. This verse is a double-edged sword. On the one side, it cuts against claims that the idolatrous associations of food make it permanently spiritually harmful and, on the other side, that eating food can somehow be spiritually advantageous.

Weak Believers + Knowledge + Love = Restricted Liberty (1 Cor. 8:9-13)

Having finished with the application of theological knowledge to the question at hand, Paul shifts to the application of love for weak believers.

> [9] But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

Surprisingly, Paul implicitly acknowledges that the Corinthians do have a right to eat food even if it has been sacrificed to idols. However, love is not just concerned with its rights. Love builds up (8:1). Therefore, those who have knowledge have an obligation to weak believers not to become a stumbling block.

The word "stumbling block" (*próskomma* πρόσκομμα) may literally refer to something that causes one to stumble and fall.[18] However, it is normally used in reference to spiritual stumbling,[19] the seriousness of which is determined by the context. In Paul, all occurrences of *próskomma* involve the sin of unbelief which separates from Christ (Rom. 9:32, 33) or an act that causes injury to a fellow believer's conscience (Rom. 14:13, 20; 1 Cor. 8:9).

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[16] By culpability I do not mean guilt or general responsibility for one's action but being held responsible by God for the act one has committed. Biblically, moral culpability is a function of one's knowledge, intent, and capacity.

[17] BDAG, s.v., παρίστημι, notes: "Some would prefer to understand 1 Cor 8:8 in this sense: βρῶμα ἡμᾶς οὐ παραστήσει τῷ θεῷ food will not bring us before (the judgment seat of) God. Likew. ἡμᾶς ἐγερεῖ καὶ παραστήσει σὺν ὑμῖν he will raise us and bring us, together with you, before him (=before his judgment seat) 2 Cor 4:14. But the forensic mng. is not certain in either of these places, and the sense is prob. bring before God = bring close to God."

[18] Hermas, *Mandate 6*, 1:3.

[19] Exod. 23:33; 34:12; Judith 8:22; Sirach 17:25; Isa. 8:14; 29:21; Jer. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:8.

In order to make clear what he means, Paul addresses a hypothetical situation that most likely was a reality in Corinth.[20]

> [10] For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?

There appears to be good evidence to support the conclusion that some meals at temples were social occasions in which relationships—personal, political, business—were made and maintained.[21] To be absent from those occasions had broader implications than simply indicating one's religious preferences.[22] Whatever external social pressure may have existed to attend such meals, we can be fairly sure that there was internal inclination to attend.

Apparently "strong" believers in Corinth, after giving the matter theological consideration and concluding that idols were nothing and meat is meat, had been attending such meals in the several temples that figured prominently in Corinth. The consciences of the weak believers at Corinth, however, forbade them to engage in what was to them idolatry.

I find it striking that Paul addresses not an actual instance of a weak believer seeing a strong believer, but the possibility of being seen. He could have said, if someone sees you there …, then there will be a problem. He didn't. He says, rather, if someone *might* see you eating food in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged[23] to eat "idol sacrifices."

In other words, the weak can't view "idol sacrifice" as just food. Seeing the "knowledgeable" eating it provides a reason that supports doing what, despite their conscience's disapproval, they want to do. Once the weak see another brother eating at a temple, they then decide to do so as well. The consequences are dire.

> [11] And so by your knowledge this weak person is [being] destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.

The language of verse 11, "this weak person is [being] destroyed," indicates that the result Paul envisions is not a single occurrence of the weak violating their conscience. As a result of their decision to eat 'idol sacrifices' *as* 'idol sacrifice,' they are sucked back into idolatry. They

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[20] The hypothetical nature of this illustration is evident from Paul's use of the third-class condition: ἐὰν γὰρ τις ἰδῃ σὲ....

[21] See Still, "Paul's Aims Regarding ΕΙΔΩΛΥΘΟΤΑ," 335-337, for examples of invitations to celebrate social events at a temple. For example, *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 2791 reads in part, "Diogenes invites you to dinner for the first birthday of his daughter in the temple of Serapis." For additional helpful information on the kind of meals and activities that took place in pagan templese, see Ben Witherington, "Why Not Idol Meat? Is It What You Eat or Where You Eat It.," *Bible Review* 10, no. 3 (1994): 38–43. Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of ldentity in the World of the Early Christians* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 158, notes that "associations and guilds were among the more prevalent local social settings in which one might encounter such sacrificial foods or meats."

[22] For additional discussion of this point, see Joel White, "Meals in Pagan Temples and Apostolic Finances: How Effective Is Paul's Argument in 1 Corinthians 9:1-23 in the Context of 1 Corinthians 8-10?" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23, no. 4 (2013): 539-40.

[23] The word translated "encouraged" is normally translated "edified" (οἰκοδομηθήσεται). I suspect an undertone of irony in Paul's choice of this word. Rather than being built up in righteousness, the person is being built up to sin!

violate their covenant relationship with God and return to a condition of "perishing or being destroyed."[24] Should they continue in that state, it would be a tragedy of eternal proportions, for Christ's death will be of no benefit to them.

> [12] Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.
> [13] Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

What Paul had called "becoming a stumbling block" (v. 7), he now calls sin. When our behavior, regardless of its legitimacy, emboldens a brother to do what he regards as wrong, we sin doubly. Not only do we sin against our brother, we sin against Christ, for our brother is a member of His body.

The seriousness of this leads Paul to conclude in verse 13 that if, as he assumed was the case in Corinth,[25] eating food became a means by which a brother is encouraged to violate his conscience and thus to fall into sin and idolatry, then banishing meat from his diet was the necessary response. The ESV's "I will never eat meat" doesn't quite capture the ringing tone of Paul's emphatic assertion. More literally he writes, "I will by no means eat meat forever!"

Unfortunately, the KJV's translation of 1 Cor. 8:13 has been misread by many modern English readers: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

The word translated by the Authorized Version "to offend," in context, cannot be referring to "causing dislike, anger, or vexation" by one's actions. While believers should seek to avoid angering or vexing one another (Rom. 12:18), that is certainly not what Paul is talking about here. In fact, most of what conservative Christians refer to as "offending" them, does not

[24] Paul uses a mid./pass. voice form of ἀπόλλυμι eight times in the Corinthian correspondence. Four times it functions as an antonym to those who are being saved (σῳζομένοις): (1) denoting those who are presently unsaved and perishing (1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 4:3-4), and (2) denoting dead believers who, assuming Christ is not risen, have perished and are eternally without hope (1 Cor. 15:18). In two instances, it refers to the Israelites who died in the wilderness for refusing to look at the bronze serpent (1 Cor. 10:9) and for grumbling (1 Cor. 10:10), implying that they died apart from saving grace and perished both physically and spiritually (cf. Psa. 95:7; Heb. 3:11-19). In 2 Cor. 4:9 Paul affirmed that he and his companions were struck down (καταβαλλόμενοι) but not destroyed (ἀπολλύμενοι), which appears to mean not physically dead. Elsewhere Paul uses the mid/pass. only two times, where it refers to unsaved persons who will (Rom. 2:12) or are (2 Thess. 2:10) perishing. The active voice forms occur twice in Paul. In 1 Cor. 1:19 where God declares his intent to "destroy the wisdom of the wise," and in Rom. 14:15 which corresponds to 1 Cor. 8:11 in its admonition not to destroy (μὴ ἀπόλλυε) with food the one for whom Christ died. The use of the instrumental dative in Rom. 14:15 parallels the instrumental use of ἐν in 1 Cor. 8:11, arguing for taking ἀπόλλυται as passive voice, not a middle voice (contra NET note ad loc.) Given this data, the reading of ἀπόλλυται in 1 Cor. 8:11 that comports best with Pauline usage is that the brother for whom Christ died violates his conscience and returns to idolatry thus shifting from a believing posture to an unbelieving posture and is, by the strong's knowledge, being destroyed spiritually. Whether he would remain in such a state is not addressed in this context.

[25] Note the first-class condition in verse thirteen: εἰ βρῶμα σκανδαλίζει τὸν ἀδελφόν....

"offend" (σκανδαλίζει) them in the slightest degree. They do not find themselves emboldened to sin against their conscience and imitate the behavior of others.[26]

Summary of Paul's Themes in 1 Cor. 8

Having traced the line of Paul's argument through this chapter, let me summarize its main themes. Knowledge without love promotes pride (8:1), defiles weak consciences (8:7), creates stumbling blocks (8:9, 12), sins against and wounds the consciences of the weak (8:12), destroys those for whom Christ died (8:11), and worst of all sins against Christ Himself (8:12).

Knowledge used with love edifies others (8:1), takes care that its rights do not defile weak consciences (8:7), does not create stumbling blocks for others (8:9, 12), and restricts its rights and liberty for the good of others, for the good of Christ's body (8:13), and thus for the glory of God.

Those without knowledge are weak. Those with knowledge but without love are destructive. Clearly then, operating according to both knowledge and love is desirable, but operating according to love is most important.

Paul's Method of Assessing Cultural Practices in 1 Cor. 8

Paul sets the stage by admitting that both knowledge and love have a role to play in assessing cultural practices. He analyzes three things: (1) the meaning of the practice itself, (2) the intent and conscience of those engaged in the practice, and (3) the effect(s) on those observing the practice.

In order to analyze the meaning of the practice itself, Paul applies biblical data (theological knowledge) to the cultural practice: idols are nothing; there's only one God; food doesn't commend us to God. The goal is to determine whether the elements of the practice, in this case food, are lawful and thus permissible.

Second, he applies biblical data to the cultural practitioner: they have knowledge, their conscience is strong, implied: they act with faith (cf. Rom. 14:22), their intentions are God-honoring (8:4). The goal here is to determine that they are acting in good faith with a clear conscience.

Third, he applies sociological/psychological data to the believing observers of the practitioners: eating 'idol sacrifices' was a major issue and widely known; people have been destroyed by this practice (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:7-8); observation could embolden the weak believer to do wrong. The goal here is to determine how weak Christians are impacted.

[26] Paul uses the verb σκανδαλίζω only here and 2 Cor. 11:29. However, this term is used in the Gospels to refer to a fall that results in the ultimate destruction of a person in hell (Matt. 5:29-30; 13:21; 18:6; Luke 7:23; John 6:61; 16:1). Thus the set of terms Paul uses here (stumbling block, wound, destroy, cause to stumble) point toward a person turning from faith in Christ back to sin and unbelief.

Fourth, he applies the criterion of love—self-sacrificially seeking others' highest good—to evaluate what strong believers should do with their rights in this matter: those "in the know" must forbear from exercising any right that could be the cause of a weak believer falling from grace into sin. The goal here is to avoid causing another believer to fall into sin.[27]

Implications for Assessing Contemporary Cultural Practices

The threshold for a contemporary analog is high. It must be a (1) public activity, (2) whose morality is disputed (3) due to its associations and not its nature (4) regarding which the weak who believe it to be wrong may be influenced to violate their conscience and so (5) fall into sin and be destroyed/perish (ἀπόλλυται; 8:11).[28] This passage does not address a host of practices which certain believers do not like or find annoying. The question here is not, "Could it be annoying?" The question here is, "Could it be destroying?" When the answer is "Yes," love for others obligates us to limit our liberty and abstain from engaging in it publicly.

Meat Markets and Dinner Invitations: Knowledge & Associations (1 Cor. 10:23-33)

As much as he has provided the Corinthians and us in the way of a method of assessing cultural practices, Paul isn't finished.

Example and Exhortation: 1 Cor. 9:1–10:1-22

What I used to regard as a very long digression (9:1-10:22) turns out, upon further study, to be ingenious stage setting for the conclusion of Paul's treatment of "idol sacrifices." 1 Cor. 9 is Paul's demonstration that he practices what he preaches. Using the key terms the "knowledgeable" Corinthians had used—freedom, right, knowledge—he shows that though he could justly use his rights and freedom to "eat and drink" (9:4), to take along a wife (9:5), to refrain from working for a living (9:6), and to live off of his labor as an apostle (9:7-14), yet he makes use of none of these rights for the sake of the gospel (9:15-23). In vv. 20-22, he specifically states that he became as a Jew to Jews, as under the law to those under the law, as without law to those without law, weak to those who are weak.

Please note two important implications of 9:20-22: (1) Paul's example indicates that it is not hypocritical to limit one's liberty with the weak and not limit one's liberty when not around the

[27] If you find yourself responding to someone's question or hesitance with "Oh, come on, there's nothing wrong with …," it may be a good indicator that you are about to become a stumbling block. The assertion "there's nothing wrong with X," suggests that you are responding to a perception that there may be something wrong with it. Regardless of the actual nature of the case, the strong have an obligation not to "blow off" the perception of others. The expression "come on" has an element of rhetorical arm-twisting, suggesting that the person addressed is acting in an unreasonable manner. Again, the strong should engage to discover if behind the brother's behavior is a conscience that is liable to pressure.

[28] See Appendix 1 for a comparison of 1 Cor. 8:1-11:1 and Rom. 14:1-15:4. Though the issues differ, Paul offers the same response: the strong should limit their liberty in cases where issues of disagreement are known to cause weak believers to fall into sin.

weak,[29] and (2) Paul's statement of his methods in this letter necessarily informed the "weak" at Corinth that he didn't always act the way he did when he was around them. This teaches us that from Paul's perspective, we are not necessarily creating a stumbling block for weak brothers by letting them know that our limitation of our liberties takes place around them, and not necessarily in all other places.

Paul concludes his demonstration by noting that rather than making full use of his liberty, he restricts and disciplines himself to avoid being disqualified from the Christian race (9:24-27). Segueing from the possibility of disqualification, Paul demonstrates in 10:1-22 that redeemed people have actually been overthrown (10:5), fallen (10:8), and perished (10:9-10), in part due to eating "idol sacrifice" and engaging in immorality (10:7-8).[30] For this reason, the "knowledge-able" of chapter 8 should take instruction from Israel's history (10:11), avoid pride (10:12), and flee idolatry (10:14).

Throughout 10:1-22 Paul appears to highlight a connection between eating and drinking as a cultural practice that brings one into fellowship with the host. Specifically, those who ate and drank from God's altar are sharing fellowship with Him (10:15-18). So too, those who eat and drink from an idol's altar are sharing fellowship with demons (10:20-21). Yet he maintains that the problem is not with the food itself, and that an idol has no real existence (10:19). The problem is the idolatrous and spiritually adulterous intention that the act normally involves (10:20-22).

Key Principles: Lawful, Beneficial, Edifying (1 Cor. 10:23-24)

I suspect that Paul can almost hear the Corinthian response: "But there's nothing wrong with eating meat!" Therefore, he turns to the key secondary principles that are entailed by the primary principles of the Christian life—love for God and others.

> [23] "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up.
> [24] Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

The line "all things are lawful" (cf. 6:12) was apparently a favorite one among some at Corinth.[31] I take this line to mean that anything which is not explicitly or implicitly forbidden by Scripture is permissible. Paul does not deny the assertion. Instead, he agrees implicitly and then raises their sights.

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[29] Further support of this is found in Acts 21:21-27 where Paul engages in an OT ritual while in Jerusalem to dispel the rumors that he was teaching Jews to abandon the law, not to circumcise their children, and not to walk according to the traditions. Paul recognized that engaging voluntarily would dispel misunderstandings without compromising the gospel.

[30] Note that connection between 'idol sacrifice' and immorality is explicit in both the apostolic prohibition issued in Acts 15 and in the condemnation Jesus issues in Rev. 2:14 and 2:20.

[31] The quotation marks in the ESV (so also NET, RSV, NLT, NIV) indicate that the translators regard the phrase "all things are lawful" as a line from the Corinthians' letter to the apostle. While this is possible, it is not necessary to verify this, since Paul concedes their point and then builds on it.

Indeed, many things are permissible.[32] But not everything that is permissible is helpful. Not everything that is permissible builds up. And then just in case they don't get it, he rephrases the second great commandment to drive home his point: "Let no one seek his own [benefit], but the [benefit] of his neighbor."[33]

Determining the lawfulness or permissibility of a practice is, according to Paul, only the bottommost rung of the ladder of Christian responsibility. The application of love requires us to evaluate whether a given cultural practice is beneficial and/or upbuilding.[34]

These principles add a positive dimension to the criterion of love that Paul established in 1 Cor. 8:13. Not only must we avoid being a stumbling block to fellow believers, but we must also evaluate whether what is lawful is also beneficial and edifying to others. Since love edifies (8:1), its goal is not just to avoid harm but to supply benefit. Love motivates us to be value-adders, not simply neutral, let alone value-subtracters.

Unknown History: The Case of the Meat Market (1 Cor. 10:25-26)

In vv. 25-26 Paul addresses the second of the three cases dealing with food sacrificed to idols.

> [25] Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience.
> [26] For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

It was well known that excess meat from temple sacrifices was sold to the meat market and resold to the public. Given the number of temples in Corinth, the likelihood was high that a majority of the meat in the market had come from a temple.

The weak were probably inclined to claim since the meat had been sacrificed to a demon, its associations permanently set it off limits to believers. Paul denies this. His denial is theologically rooted: meat is part of God's creation, and thus it all comes ultimately from him, regardless of its secondary associations.

What I find interesting here is that Paul directs believers not to ask questions about the history of items whose associations are unknown. When a practice or item is lawful and we have no information regarding wrongful associations, we do not need to inquire about its history. Then as today, this runs counter to the conscientious person's inclinations. Yet, the Spirit inspired Paul to direct us not to enquire "on account of conscience."

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[32] The word translated "lawful" (ἔξεστιν) does not have direct reference to the OT or the Mosaic Law. It means "it is permissible." Since Paul agrees with the Corinthians that all things not explicitly or implicitly forbidden by God are permissible, the term "lawful" is an acceptable English translation.

[33] Paul doesn't actually use the word "good" in v. 24. It reads literally, "let no one seek the of himself, but the of the other." The word "the" (τό) is neuter both times it occurs here and most likely refers to the idea of "benefit" (σύμφορον) as indicated by Paul's concluding admonition: "just as I … seek not my own benefit but the benefit of the many that they may be saved, be imitators of me" (10:33-11:1).

[34] Note that Paul denies that eating meat is spiritually edifying in 8:9. Things may be beneficial without necessarily being edifying.

We might ask, "Whose conscience, Paul? the buyer's? the seller's? the observer's?" He doesn't say, and perhaps the ambiguity is intentional.[35] The irony is that in this case having theological knowledge makes having knowledge of the item's history unnecessary. The "weak" are better off not knowing—it allows them to eat the meat without committing idolatry. The seller is better off if the customer doesn't know—it keeps him from wrongly concluding that one may be a Christian and venerate idols.

We need to grasp this firmly: even with issues as serious as idolatry and demon worship, the Christian need not enquire regarding a "lawful" thing's history to make use of it.[36]

The Case of Eating with an Unbeliever (1 Cor. 10:27-30)

In verses 27-30 Paul addresses the third case involving "idol sacrifice."

> [27] If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience.
> [28] But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience--
> [29] I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience?
> [30] If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

This case is much like the second. The possibility exists that the meat served may be "idol sacrifice," but there is no certain knowledge. Again, Paul gives explicit directions to eat whatever is set before you and forbids inquiring to learn if it is non-idolatrous.

However, in a case where someone informs the believer that the food is "temple sacrifice," they are not to eat it. The ground for Paul's prohibition is, again, "conscience." However, the explanation that follows in vv. 28-30 indicates that the conscience Paul has in view is not the partaker's conscience, but the informer's.[37]

Garland helpfully provides three consequences that would follow from a Christian's "willing consumption of what has been announced as food sacrificed to idols:

1. It would compromise their confession of the one true God with a tacit recognition of the sanctity of pagan gods.

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[35] The clarification in the following case suggests that Paul does not have the "knower's" conscience in view. It seems likely, therefore, that he has only the consciences of observers in view.

[36] The relation between Paul's approach here and God's requirement that cultural artifacts that had idolatrous uses be destroyed (Exod. 23:24; 34:13; Num. 33:52; Deut. 7:5, 25; 12:3) is challenging. Perhaps the fact that, as human creations, idolatrous artifacts had no non-idolatrous function accounts for their mandated destruction. Further, their potential to serve as a gateway into idolatry also distinguishes them from items, like meat, of divine creative origin.

[37] Implicit in Paul's prohibition is his understanding that the conscience operates on the basis of knowledge. This appears to have implications for counseling those whose consciences have been wrongly trained to sense guilt based on what is unknown but possible. We can tell people that a sense of guilt for not knowing possible associations of an item or practice is unbiblical and should be rejected as false guilt.

2. It would confirm rather than challenge the unbeliever's idolatrous convictions and would not lead the unbeliever away from the worship of false gods … and would signal the Christian's endorsement of idolatry.
3. It would disable the basic Christian censure of pagan gods as false gods that embody something demonic and make that censure seem hypocritical."[38]

[29] I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience?
[30] If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

Verse 29b provides a crucial balancing truth to what Paul has said so far. To this point, one might conclude that since eating meat sacrificed to an idol could be a sin against a brother and against Christ (8:12), it ought to be regarded as "unlawful" and thus impermissible to Christians. Paul refuses to do that. He will not deny liberty in order to appeal to love.

Other people's consciences do not establish limits to the liberty of other believers. Liberty to do what is lawful belongs to every believer, but its exercise must be motivated and controlled by love.

Commentators share a general uncertainty regarding whether verse 30 relates to vv. 28-29 or to the issue of attending a meal with an unbeliever, and I share their uncertainty at this point. What does seem to be clear about v. 30 is Paul's assumption that when one gives thanks to God for food, it has been consecrated to God, and thus loses whatever ungodly associations it may have had previously (cf. 1 Tim. 4:4-5).

The Identity of the Weak

Having covered the three cases Paul addresses, it will be helpful to extract from his discussion the characteristics of those who are "weak in conscience,"[39] and distinguish between essential and incidental characteristics.

The following characteristics of the weak are indicated in this passage:

1. They lack theological knowledge, apparently because they don't know how to interpret Scripture (1 Cor. 8:4-6; 10:26).
2. They believe a practice is sinful, but are biblically incorrect (cf. 1 Cor. 10:29-30; Rom. 14:2, 14)
3. Their conscience continues to regard as wrong or to have doubts about the legitimacy of a practice even after receiving biblical data that demonstrates that it is not wrong (cf. Rom. 14).
4. The weaker brother can be influenced by others' actions to violate their conscience and do what he believes is forbidden. (1 Cor. 8:10; cf. Rom. 14:20-22).

[38] Garland, BECNT, 497.

[39] Though Paul uses the language of "weak in faith" in Romans 14:1, there appears to be no essential difference between that and his "weak conscience" language in 1 Cor. 8-10.

In order for a brother to qualify as "weak," the fourth characteristic is the necessary characteristic.[40] One can be theologically ignorant, believe something is wrong, hear explanations why it isn't wrong, but not be influenced by others. Such a person may be immature spiritually, but they are not "weak."[41]

Concluding Principles (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1)

Paul concludes by returning to the two great commandments and their supreme example.

> 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
> 32 Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,
> 33 just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.
> 1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

God is glorified when the unique excellence of His character is seen in us, when His goodness is seen, savored, and shown to others, when we imitate His self-sacrificing love for the good of others. In the most mundane of activities, "whether you eat or drink," our active intent should be that God's unique excellence be displayed in us.[42]

In verse 32, for the first time, Paul names the categories of observers whose consciences are at stake. The Jew was the religious non-Christian, whose morals were generally strict. The Greek was the pagan, whether polytheist or atheist. The "church of God" refers to fellow believers. Each category has its own distinctive challenges, and will require believers to be flexible in their applications of liberty and love.[43]

Paul's claim that he pleases all men in all things on first glance seems impossible.[44] Since, however, he says nearly the same thing in Romans 15:2, it helps us understand his meaning: "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up." Paul is not speaking of being a "people pleaser"—one who seeks to accommodate all the preferences of others. Rather, he is committed to seeking the good of all men in all things, and that "good" is that they be "saved."

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[40] The categories of people most likely, though not exclusively, to be weak include new converts, young people, and people with overly sensitive consciences. Key behavioral signs that a person may be weak are (1) discomfort in manner when an activity is mentioned, (2) reluctance to participate in a proposed activity, and (3) asking questions regarding the moral validity of a proposed or current activity. Key diagnostic questions that one might use to determine whether the person is indeed a weak brother/sister include: Does your conscience bother you at all on this matter? Have you felt badly after doing this? Do you feel a little bit of pressure to do something you aren't sure is right?

[41] The fact that Paul provides information to the weak in both Corinth and Rome argues that he intends for them to be strengthened and to mature out of weakness. However, Hebrews 5:12-14 clearly indicates some believers may be immature and undeveloped long past the time when they should have matured. Thus, what *ought* to be the case and what *is* the case are not always in sync.

[42] I see no grounds to view doing "all to the glory of God" as a purely public behavioral code. How we "let down our hair" in private is as much in view as any of our public activities.

[43] See 1 Cor. 9:20-23 for Paul's description of how he flexibly makes use of his liberty in love.

[44] The ESV's "try to please" doesn't capture the affirmative tone of Paul's statement, "Just as I also please all men in all things" καθὼς κἀγὼ πάντα πᾶσιν ἀρέσκω (so also NIV, NLT, HCSB).

The term "saved" is frequently used in Scripture in regard to conversion of sinners. It would be easy to assume, therefore, that Paul has evangelism as his primary aim. Evangelism is certainly encompassed by Paul's meaning. However, it does not exhaust it.

Notice that he has just identified the "church of God" as one of those whom he seeks to please that they may be saved. The church does not need initial salvation. It needs to be finally and fully saved. Regeneration is the starting point of salvation; glorification in resurrected immorality appears to be the termination point of salvation. Seeking the "salvation" of others includes the entire scope of God's planned redemption.

Love for Jews and Greeks seeks to remove any hindrance to their entrance into the Kingdom of God. Love for the church of God seeks to remove any hindrance to their journey in the Kingdom and to help them on their way to God.[45]

Paul's final exhortation to imitate him even as he imitates Christ beautifully unites this entire section (8:1-11:1) by connecting his admonitions and example with the ultimate exemplar of self-sacrificing love. Paul essentially challenges the Corinthians, in Ellington's words, "to become συγκοινωνοί of the gospel … so that Christ's death for others, both its pattern and power, shapes the way [they] carry out their life together" just as it was shaping Paul's life.[46]

Conclusion

This paper's title references "cultural change." To this point our exegetical tour through 1 Cor. 8:1-11:1 has not highlighted the tidal changes through which Paul was guiding the Corinthians. Consider a few of these changes. For Christian Jews the changes would have included: shifting from long-held beliefs about eating with any Gentile, let alone unsaved Gentiles; accepting Gentiles as fellow citizens of the household of God; relinquishing the perspective that by keeping the law and the customs of the Fathers, they were more pleasing to God.

For Christian Greeks, the changes would have included: the loss of social standing and the misunderstanding that would accompany ceasing to attend meals at local temples; the internal adjustments necessary to relinquish the right to enjoy social eating and drinking at temples out of consideration for weaker believers; accepting that Israelite history was not ethnically limited, but had relevance to Gentiles who nonetheless were living under the new covenant.

All of these changes and more intersect in the question of can food offered to an idol be eaten. Paul's answer is not a simple yes or no, but it depends on where, and what you know, and who you're with, and what they know. The matrix Paul provides for evaluating the meaning and morality of a cultural practice is not a simple one. It is, nonetheless, workable. The following

[45] This understanding of Paul's meaning finds additional support in 1 Cor. 9:22, where he becomes "weak" to the "weak" that he may save some. The "weak" in this context always refer to weak believers. Thus Paul limits his liberty when around the "weak" that he may strengthen them and so help them on their way to final salvation.

[46] Dustin Watson Ellington, "Imitating Paul's Relationship to the Gospel: 1 Corinthians 8.1-11.1." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 3 (2011): 304.

chart and outline provide my best attempt to capture the process of evaluation Paul models for us in 1 Cor. 8-10.

A Pauline Matrix for Assessing the Meaning and Morality of Cultural Practices

Paul's Matrix: A Summary		
The Practice	**The Practitioner**	**The Observers**
	Love for God	Love for others
Theological analysis: Creation – Fall – Redemption?	knowledge & conscience?	knowledge & conscience?
Lawful or Unlawful?	intent?	stumbling block?
Associations?	beneficial?	beneficial?
	edifying?	edifying?
	God-glorifying?	God-glorifying?
		soul-saving?

Assessing a Cultural Practice: the Practice Itself

1. Theological Analysis
   a. Creation: What elements of God's original creation are evident in this practice?
   b. Fall: In what ways has the Fall affected this practice?
   c. Redemption: How does Christ's redemption of us impact this practice?
   d. How do Christ's incarnation, general revelation, common grace, and the image of God in man relate to this practice?
2. Lawful or Unlawful Analysis
   a. What does Scripture say about this practice?
   b. What does Scripture imply about this practice?
3. Associations Analysis
   a. What associations do I know this practice has? (1 Cor. 8:1-6)
   b. If unlawful, what associations has it had in the past? (1 Cor. 10:6-8)

Assessing a Cultural Practice: the Practitioner

1. What do I know about this practice (from 1-3 above)?
2. Can I practice this with a clear conscience or do I have doubts (Rom. 14:22)?
3. What is my intent or purpose for doing this? What do I mean to do by this practice? (Love for God & Others)
4. In what way(s) will this be beneficial for me? (1 Cor. 10:23)
5. In what way(s) will this be edifying to me? (1 Cor. 10:23)
6. How will doing this reflect the unique excellence of who God is? (1 Cor. 10:31)

Assessing a Cultural Practice: the Observers

Key question: What are the consequences of doing this for others?

For the Christian Observer

1. Does the observer believe the practice is wrong? (Rom. 14:1; Acts 15)

   a. Is the observer weak—lack biblical knowledge, remain doubtful after receiving biblical information, can be pressured to violate conscience?
   b. If so, don't do it around them.
2. Is the practice known to be a matter of controversy?
   a. Do I know of anyone whose conscience is weak in this matter? I.e., has this been a stumbling block to anyone? (1 Cor. 8:7)
   b. Could I be observed in this matter by someone who is weak? (1 Cor. 8:10)?
   c. If so, don't do it in public.
3. In what way(s) will this be beneficial to those who see me doing this or participate with me? (1 Cor. 10:23)
4. In what way(s) will this be edifying to those who see me doing this or participate with me? I.e., how will this help others "on to God"? (1 Cor. 10:23, 33)
5. In what way(s) will this reflect the glory of God to others? (1 Cor. 10:31)

For Non-Christian Observers

1. Religious Observers (≈Jews)
   a. Is this practice known to be a matter of controversy? (Acts 21:20-25)
   b. What do "Jews" understand this practice to mean? (1 Cor. 10:28)
   c. Will doing this put a stumbling block in the path of a "Jew" coming to Christ? (1 Cor. 10:28, 32-33)
   d. Will doing this be beneficial to "Jews" who see me doing this or participate with me (1 Cor. 10:23)
   e. In what way(s) will this reflect the glory of God to "Jews"? (1 Cor. 10:31)
2. Pagan Observers (≈Greeks)
   a. What do "Greeks" understand this practice to mean?
      i. What do its "Greek" cultural authors say that it means?
      ii. What do its "Greek" cultural participants say that it means?
      iii. What do or have "Greek" cultural analysts (social critics, sociologists, cultural observers) say that it means?
   b. Will doing this put a stumbling block in the path of a "Greek" coming to Christ? (1 Cor. 10:32-33)
   c. Will doing this be beneficial to "Greeks" who see me doing this or participate with me (1 Cor. 10:23)
   d. In what way(s) will this reflect the glory of God to "Greeks"? (1 Cor. 10:31)

Appendix 1
1 Cor. 8:1-11:1 and Romans 14:1-15:1: A Comparison

	1 Cor. 8-10	Rom. 14
Persons	• Weak conscience / weak (8:7, 9, 10, 11, 12; 9:22) • Knowledgeable (8:10, 11) • Jew, Greek, Church of God (10:32)	• Weak in faith (14:1, 2) • Strong (15:1) • Jew, Gentile (implied)
Issue	• food offered to idols > idolatry	• eating meat vs vegetables • clean vs unclean food • sacred days vs common days • drinking wine vs not
Knowledge of the issue	• A known issue of debate at Corinth	• Known issues of debate at Rome
Danger to Weak	• stumbling block (*próskomma* 8:9) • destroyed/perish (*apóllumi* 8:11) • sin against weak (*hamartano* 8:12) • wound weak's conscience (*tupto* 8:12) • cause weak to stumble (*skandalizo* 8:13)	• stumbling block (*próskomma* 14:13, 20; *proskóptei* 14:21) • hindrance/trap (*skándalon* 14:13) • destroyed (*apóllumi* 14:15) • sin (*hamartia* 14:23) • grieved/hurt (*lupeítai* 14:15) • condemned if he eats without faith (*katakrino* 14:23)
Warnings	• Don't become a stumbling block (*próskomma* 8:9) • Give no offense (*aproskopos* 10:32)	• Don't judge or despise each other • Don't put a stumbling block (*próskomma*) or hindrance (*skándalon*) in a brother's way (14:13) • Do not destroy your brother (*apóllumi* 14:15) • Do not destroy the work of God (*katalúo* 14:20)
Goal	• edification (8:1; 10:23) • let each seek the benefit/good of the other (10:24) • do all for God's glory (10:31)	• pursue peace and edification (14:19) • please our neighbor for good to edification (15:2)

	• profit of all (10:33) • salvation of all (10:33)	

Differences
The key difference between these two passages is the nature of the issues involved. In 1 Cor. 8-10 the issue is eating food as "idol sacrifice" and thus committing idolatry. In Romans 14 the issues are matters that are not biblical requirements.

Similarities
What is most striking about this comparison is that the dangers, warnings, and goals are virtually identical. In both cases, Paul is concerned that the weak not be destroyed by the behavior of the strong. Thus, the strong are in all cases to avoid creating a stumbling block over known issues of disagreement with believers who are the weak.

Idolatry clearly leads to apostasy, but how does eating clean vs. unclean food or eating meat vs. vegetables lead to destruction? There is only one way—by being influenced to do what one believes to be wrong and violating one's conscience. Thus, while every such wounding may not lead to destruction, one must avoid all such wounding lest in any case destruction be the result.