

Living Free of Idolatry
1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Paul now returns to the issue of idol worship but in the context of visiting pagan temples and taking part in pagan temple festivals.

His primary concern still stems from the fear of disqualification he mentioned in 9:27.

As we saw last week, Israel had every advantage but still missed the finish line of the Promised Land. To use Paul's terms, they 'beat the air' for 40 years with no positive results.

Of his four warnings in vs 7-10,

- 1 – Don't be an idolater
- 2 – Don't be sexually immoral
- 3 – Don't test Christ
- 4 – Don't complain

He focuses on the first one in this text and likens idol worship to his worry that the Corinthians will "*desire evil...*" (v 6).

He's concerned that the Corinthians think they stand on this issue, when they are about to fall – v 12

First: Wisdom about the Lord's Table 16-18

V 15 – Since the Corinthians claim to be wise, Paul rests in their wisdom about this issue

Matthew 26:26-29 - *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

- There are traditionally 3 pieces of bread (matzah) at a Seder.
- "*This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in Egypt*".
- It is not, however, our affliction that we remember in the Lord's Table but that of Jesus,

Isaiah 53:4 - *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

- There are traditionally 4 cups in the Seder

- The Four Cups represent the four expressions of deliverance promised by God in - Exodus 6:6–7:

Exodus 6:6-7 - 'I am the LORD, and

- I will bring you out* [sanctification/Jn 17:19] *from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and*
- I will deliver you* [deliverance/Jn 8:32] *from slavery to them, and*
- I will redeem you* [redemption Gal 4:4-5] *with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.*
- ⁷*I will take you* [praise/Jn 15:11] *to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*

- The cup that represents Jesus's blood fulfills all four cups.

The Lord is having the Passover meal with his disciples and somewhere in the midst of the Passover meal, he translates it into a supper that does not memorialize the exodus from Egypt but his exodus, death.

This meal becomes the basis of Paul's entire argument in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 when he argues that a believer should avoid idolatry.

- 16a - Communion claims communion with Christ's blood

'partakers' = 'communion' in 10:16 & 20

- 16b - Communion claims communion with Christ's body
- 17 - Communion claims communion with the church body

To eat at someone's table indicated intimacy and unity.

Later this morning we are going to celebrate communion, the Lord's Table, and in so doing, we are claiming fellowship, unity with him. We are saying that Christ lived, died and returned to life for us.

- 18 - Israel is the model

When Israel went to the Temple, they all worshipped the same way and worshipped the same God. It united them to each other and to God. In the same way, communion binds us to each other and to one another in God.

Second: Wisdom about the Pagan Temple Worship. 19-20

a) 19 - An idol is nothing – 8:4

The Corinthians thought,

- *“Since an idol is not real, it doesn’t matter what we eat, and it doesn’t matter where we eat it.”*
- *“As long as we participate in the Lord’s Table, we are safe in Him*

There are multiple problems with idols:

- 1 – It really does misrepresent, it can’t begin to properly represent, our God so it makes us think less of God than we should and need to think of him
- 2 - We become like what we worship
- 3 – We trust in something that can’t save us

And so Paul began his argument in v 14, “Therefore, my beloved, free from idolatry.”

The ‘*therefore*’ is there because

- They are not as aware as they need to be – v 12
- This is an unnecessary temptation – v 13

b) 20a – Because idol sacrifice is to Satan, not God

It is true that idols are nothing but it’s also true that Satan will take advantage of that ignorance about idols and impersonate the god who is not there.

Deuteronomy 32:17 – They sacrificed to demons that were no gods,

Psalm 106:36-37 - They served their idols, which became a snare to them. ³⁷ They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons...

c) 20b – To sacrifice to idols is to honor demons

Instead of not worshipping anything, the worshipper is communing with demons. This makes idol temple worship satanic.

Corinthian Christians were taking communion on Sunday morning and then having pagan Temple communion to idols on Monday.

d) 21 – You can’t do both

APP: What are modern idols?

- Wealth without generosity
- Knowledge without application
- Marriage without sacrifice
- Life without suffering
- Church without ministry
- Material goods without purpose
- Health without service
- Joy without sorrow

Third: Wisdom about God's Jealousy 22

It doesn't matter that the Corinthian Christians didn't intend worship demons at these heathen feasts in pagan temples. If a man puts his hand into the fire, it doesn't matter if he intends to burn himself or not, he is burned just the same.

If a man dates a woman, and they get serious about their relationship, what will happen if he takes up the same kind of relationship with another woman? What will the first woman think? The man cannot simply say, "Well, I still give attention to you!"

a) God is a jealous God.

Jealousy = * Negative - *"a feeling of resentment against someone because of that person's rivalry, success, or advantages. It is characterized by or proceeds from suspicious fears or envious resentment"* (Dictionary.com)

1 - First human jealousy in the Bible - Genesis 30:1 - *"When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister."*

Positive - *"being solicitous or vigilant in maintaining and guarding something"* (Dictionary.com)

2 - First Godly jealousy in the Bible - Exodus 20:5-6 - *"You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."*

God is jealous at least three ways -

- (1) for his name
- (2) for his holiness
- (3) for his love

b) God is a righteously jealous God

God is the only Being who can be righteously jealous. It would be wrong of God, unrighteous of him, not to be jealous for what is most beautiful, great or good.

c) God's jealousy is for our good

God is jealous at least three ways –

- (1) for his name – We are saved by his name (Acts 4:12)– We should honor his name
- (2) for his holiness – We are saved because he is holy (Ex 20:2) - We should serve him
- (3) for his love - We are saved because he loves us (Ro 5:8) – We should love him most

*Prone to wander, Lord I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, oh take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above*

Conclusion:

- Idols are so much less than what we were made for.
- Because idols are less than God, idol worship shrinks our souls.
- Because idols are something other than God, idol worship inhibits our humanity.

Community Groups:

1 – Read Matthew 26:26-29. What did the Passover memorialize? How does it easily transform into the Lord's Supper? What does the Lord's Supper memorialize? How is Passover a precursor to the Lord's Supper?

2 – What does the bread memorialize in the Lord's Supper? What does the drink memorialize in the Lord's Super?

3 – What are we claiming when we participate in the Lord's Supper?

4 – Why shouldn't unbelievers participate in the Lord's Supper?

5 – Why is pagan temple worship a big deal if idols aren't really anything?

6 – How can demons take advantage of pagan temple worship?

7 – Why can't we participate in the Lord's Table and an idol's table?

8 – Why is God a jealous God?

9 – How is he righteously a jealous God?

10 – How does God's jealousy benefit us?

11 – What modern idol tables exist for 21st century Christians?