

1Corinthians 10:20-22 "At What Table Do You Eat?"

As we come to our text this morning I want to pick up on something I touched on last week but didn't get a chance to really spend any time defining and expounding on. And I believe it's important that we get a handle on this because there is the tendency in the church-at-large to think that Christians are exempt from having any participation in the schemes of Satan.

By participating in the schemes of Satan I mean the unwitting support of furthering his agenda which is to deceive the nations and keep people, both unbelievers and believers, from knowing and living according to the truth of God's word.

As we consider our text Paul has something specific in mind when he talks about being participants with demons. Let's look at the text again.

1CO 10:19-21 "Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons."

If we look closely at our text, keeping in mind that he's been dealing with the abuse of Christian liberties, we notice that Paul is addressing a problem which evidently involved Christians who inadvertently promoted demonic practices of worship.

The case in Corinth involves Christians who feel they are mature enough to eat meat sacrificed to idols under any circumstance. Paul has made it clear that eating meat sacrificed to idols, in and of itself, is not sinful. And the reason is that there are no such things as idols, or the gods they represent.

And so, it might be the equivalent of going to Winn Dixie and picking up your favorite cut of meat after learning that someone claiming to be a sorcerer walked up and down the meat isles chanting and saying prayers as he dedicated that meat to some god.

You blow it off as being just some nut who may very well believe in what he's doing but you know that any sort of god only exists in his own mind and cannot influence or inhabit the molecules of that meat.

Granted, someone might argue that maybe bacon or ham could be influenced or inhabited since demons once asked Jesus to be cast into swine. But you'll remember that they asked that only when they knew they were to be cast out of a person and they looked for a living host to be cast into only to drown the swine.

And so, you have much more to fear in the fat and the nitrates they put into the bacon or ham than you do from any spiritual influence from that meat. This is what Paul is saying to these Corinthians who lived in a time and place where the meat was often ceremonially blessed and offered up to these idols.

He says, you don't need to fear or feel compelled not to eat that meat. But, he also teaches that despite this, there is another matter which comes into play, and that is the conscience of another person who may not see the truth of this situation in quite the same way.

The truth of God's word on matters of liberty may not change, but individuals at different levels of maturity will walk in their faith at different levels. And depending where they are spiritually certain situations may in fact keep them from growing in their faith.

And so, Paul says that despite what you may know to be the truth on any matter that deals with liberties we have in Christ, you still need to be sensitive enough not to use a liberty in such a way where it may actually cause another brother to sin.

1CO 8:7-9 "But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. 9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak."

Having set this context in place then, what does Paul mean in our present text when he says I do not want you to be participants with demons? You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

What Paul is addressing here is the actual participation of going into the temple where these meats could have been sold or eaten and associating yourself with the actual place or even being there when the actual blessing was occurring in regards to this meat.

Now, again, Paul is not suggesting that even being in the presence of the ceremony to offer such meat to idols makes it somehow spiritually tainted. The point Paul is making is that despite the fact that there is no such things as idols, and the gods they represent, there are such things as demons. And even though the meat is not influenced even by demons, there is an association to demons and their powers in which no believer should want to be involved.

Let's bring it into the modern arena. If you went to Haiti where certain voodoo rituals and ceremonies are taking place and let's say, maybe even certain foods are offered up to their gods, and for some reason, some of this food made it to the table of someone you knew, and you ate that meat, it would have no effect on you because food is meant for the stomach and there is nothing spiritual in the food that could affect you.

But, take that same meat and now go into the actual ceremony where it was offered to their gods. What now becomes the problem is not the meat being sacrificed to their gods but the actual demons who are associated with that ceremony.

Why would we place ourselves in that position to where we might encourage other believers to do the same? Why would we want to associate ourselves with such demonic activity which might prompt young believers to venture into such a situation and might actually find themselves accepting the teachings of such demons through the agency of the people offering up such sacrifices?

And so, what Paul is trying to bring out here is that any such activity which involves the influence of demons in an overt way is actually compromising our association with the one true God. And so, the statement from Paul, "I do not want you to be participants with demons", is meant to discourage these believers in Corinth from crossing the line from Christian liberty to an association with such demons.

Since we are Christians indwelt by the Spirit of God, why would we want to bring the Lord, or anyone else into such an association? But Paul goes a step further in this exhortation by making it clear that this is not an option. He actually gives a command from the Lord.

1CO 10:21 "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons."

In the context here Paul is once again addressing two forms of overt worship. He speaks of the public worship of Jesus Christ through the Lord's Supper, as we partake of physical elements which speak of a spiritual reality and unity we have with Christ through faith.

But Paul also speaks of an overt public worship of idols and gods in the context of the temple worship of these gods. And despite the fact that these gods do not exist, the demons who have blinded the eyes of people to deceive them into such dependence certainly do exist.

And so, Paul essentially says, look behind the curtain before entering into the temple. And by this I mean look with spiritual eyes as to what is actually taking place.

We all remember the Wizard of Oz. And there was that one scene we can all still see today when Dorothy and her friends came back to tell the wizard that they had killed the wicked witch of the west. And as they entered the great hall there was this awesome spectacle of the face of the wizard framed by flames of fire coming up from the floor.

The wizard told the foursome not to bother him and go home. Well, Dorothy and friends had just risked their lives to kill this witch and Dorothy was insistent that he come through on his promises. While they're arguing little Toto notices some movement from behind a curtain draped booth.

Toto goes under the curtain and pulls it back to reveal the real wizard, the one pulling the knobs and giving the orders. You see the image in the great hall was just a facade. It could neither live or breathe or accomplish anything. It was the person behind the curtain who had the real power.

In a similar way, Paul is saying to these Corinthians, look behind the curtain and see who is really involved in these pagan practices. And then ask yourself the question, do you really want to promote anything that has to do with the schemes and deceptions of such demons?

Don't place Christ in a position of being associated with such things. Don't place the church or individuals involved in that church in such a position of being associated with such practices and the teachings that go along with such practices.

You see, Paul is dealing with much more than just a ceremony dedicated to offering meat to idols. He's dealing with a whole system of teaching and doctrine which would lead up to such ceremonies and belief systems.

Imagine if these Corinthian believers were allowed to continue to associate themselves with eating meat in the temples. How long would it be before they began to incorporate the belief system of that temple into their own experience?

You can be sure that the priests of the temple would certainly be encouraging everyone to view their ceremonies in a particular way, and so teaching would be going on even in that atmosphere.

And as false teaching promotes a false view of God, it's only a matter of time before such false teaching creeps into the church and eventually affects it in such a way where the world now gets a false view of God and He is dishonored in the process where Christians adhere to such doctrine.

This is the real tragedy; not the hocus pocus ceremonies of any false religion where demons influence such things, but the deception through such teachings where people seek self and power as they move further and further away from the only way to the true God and Creator of this world through faith in Christ.

Paul is saying that you can't combine the things of demons and the things of God and come up with a hybrid faith and still honor God. This is where the cults come from, and unfortunately this is also where false teachers in the church can find a haven when believers are not discerning as they use the word of God as their final authority.

You may have liberties to enjoy things that are not forbidden in Scripture, but where those things may move across the line and begin to get into areas which are questionable and may even move toward those things promoted by demons, then for the sake of the brethren you need to abstain from such liberties.

And the irony of all of this is that this message is directed to born again believers who might be tempted to have the best of both worlds.

1CO 10:21 "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons."

But is the table of demons simply meant to describe some overt expression of worshipping in the temple of idols? Well, certainly in our context it is dealing with such a problem. But the teaching Paul puts forth here would also include any form of worship or teaching which would be at odds with the truth of God's word.

To combine those things of the world, which are influenced by Satan, with the things of God according to His word, is to bring a mixed message to the world. This by the way, is not simply a N.T. teaching. Going after false gods and the things they promote has been a problem with God's people from the beginning.

It was Adam and Eve who first came under the influence of the doctrines of demons. And if you don't think false doctrine produces horrendous results in the lives of God's people you need look no further than our first parents who bought into the deception and caused the entire human race to fall into sin.

By turning to such teaching from Satan there in the Garden of Eden, both Adam and Eve turned from God. They didn't overtly worship Satan. But in their lack of true worship for God in that situation they identified themselves with the table of demons in the sense that they ate a physical food with spiritual ramifications because of their rebellion.

You see a table of spiritual food is set by both God and Satan. In fact, it's interesting to note how this metaphor of eating is used by God in many instances to reflect the taking in of the spiritual things of God by faith. This is where Paul is going with this comparison of the Lord's Supper and the things of demons.

Unfortunately, the wrong food kills, or can certainly make one ill, in a spiritual sense. If we associate ourselves with the things of the enemy by ingesting, if you will, those things he feeds us, it's only a matter of time before we're ineffectual in the spiritual fight. For the believer the table of demons and the courses they serve end up making us spiritually impotent and dishonoring our God and Savior.

But, eating a steady diet of God's word and walking by faith in that word makes us spiritually vibrant and strong to do His will. And what Paul is teaching the Corinthians and us is that we don't have the luxury to dine at both tables; the table of the Lord and the table of demons, and still be useful and a faithful representative of God. Israel had this problem.

DEU 32:17-19 “They sacrificed to demons, which are not God - gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. 18 You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. 19 The LORD saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters.”

PSA 106:36, 39-40 “They worshipped their idols, which became a snare to them. 39 They defiled themselves by what they did; by their deeds they prostituted themselves. 40 Therefore the LORD was angry with his people and abhorred his inheritance.”

If we think that it’s okay with the Lord for us to go after teachings which are in direct opposition to the word of God, then we need to see that the Lord does not take kindly to His people whoring after the ways or the teachings of the world, which are essentially influenced by the doctrines of demons.

1CO 10:22 “Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?”

Whether N.T. saints or O.T. saints, God is jealous for our love. He will not share us with another. He has purchased us with the precious blood of the Son of God. We are His bride and we are united with God in Christ. We must not be associated with the table of demons or the doctrines of demons.

And by the way, the doctrines of demons are not necessarily handbooks of incantations or the Satanic bible of modern day Satanists. Satan is much too clever to influence God’s people with such things. He uses much more subtle approaches to deceive and influence God’s people.

This is what Paul warned Timothy about.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 ^{NAU} But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, ³ *men* who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

But Paul went on to say to Timothy that there is only one way to combat such worldly teachings which are designed to direct our eyes away from God and place them on self or others, and that’s through the word of God.

1 Timothy 4:6 ⁶ In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.

The table of demons, the doctrines of demons, is something Christians must avoid if they are to truly represent Christ. And this means that Christians must be discerning, because “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” (2Co. 11:14)

I guess the irony in all of this is how it is the church which is warned to take heed of these teachings of demons, because it is the church which is under constant attack, and which, despite the fact that each true believer is indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption, can still be deceived if not discerning.

What better way to render the church ineffective than to water down the truth and our total dependency on Christ for all things.

Imagine placing Christ in a subservient role to the teachings of the world for the sake of helping someone grow in their faith and walk with Christ. Imagine teaching that Christ and His word are not enough for the modern Christian to live life on a daily basis to the glory of God. And yet, what does Peter say?

2PE 1:3-4 “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

And yet, the church has placed in its midst the very teachings of the world which are contrary to the truth of God’s word. The wisdom of the world has so influenced the church that it has adopted and baptized secular psychology which was invented by professing pagans who abhorred the one true God along with the god of science that has to make every aspect of God and His creation into some naturalistic explanation.

How do you take such a godless system of dealing with the soul and spirit of a person and then bring that along-side with God’s word which also deals with the soul and spirit of a person and decide which one to use in any given circumstance? Or do you use both? And yet, what does Paul say to these same Corinthians in his second letter?

2CO 6:15-18 "What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.""

How do we mix the two systems of dealing with the soul and spirit of a person? And by the way, that's exactly what psychology is meant to deal with. The prefix *psycho* in psychology comes from the Greek *psuche* which means soul. It's the study of and subsequent answer for the correct solutions for the soul of man.

There's only one answer for the soul of man and that's Christ. And if He and His word are not sufficient for our lives here, as well as eternity, then you and I have made a mistake in calling Him Lord.

And I might add, it has been a cruel thing the Lord has done for the previous 19 centuries by not revealing this most "blessed system of psychology" to the church much earlier.

I know that this subject always gets a few eyebrows moving and I know that some of what psychology teaches may be viewed as common sense solutions which God's word already teaches. But, why wade through a godless system to find godly counsel?

In addition, almost every seminary in this country, and for that matter around the world, has succumbed to the god of science by placing it in a magisterial role over the word of God. And so, a literal six day, (evening and morning), creation is not an eye witness account of the creation; God's eye witness account, but a poetic form of how the world came to be over millions and billions of years, albeit it with God's help.

When you use a biblical exegetical approach that takes into account all genres of language, including poetry and metaphor and simile, and of course historical narrative as Genesis, then interpreting Scripture in its context takes on the intended meaning as the Spirit of God revealed it.

But when your worldly ideas take precedence and inject into your interpretation using the doctrines of demons, as you ignore the

plain teaching of Scripture, all bets are off and you can make Scripture say anything you want it to say.

And so, if God “used” some form of evolution over long periods of time to accomplish His “miraculous” creation, then six days is out the window.

There is nothing natural about God’s creation. It is entirely miraculous, (ex nihilo). Therefore, if creation can be called into question, why not question every other miraculous act of God, including Christ’s resurrection?

Look at how many times the word of God deals with false teachers and their teachings. It’s always in the context of alerting the church not to fall under their influence. Why? Because they always pull us away from the things of God and move us in a direction which is harmful.

How many times have we heard that we just need to get along with other churches which name the name of Christ? Is that not a noble thing to do? Absolutely. But only in so far as they believe and embrace by faith the same Christ of the bible and His message of salvation.

There are many religious organizations that name the name of Christ. Should we align ourselves with them and embrace them when their Christ is not God? Should we embrace them when their Christ has not paid our penalty for sin once and for all at the cross?

And yet, we’re being told by born-again Christians today, to embrace such religious organizations. We’re being told that Mormons don’t need to find a church where the true gospel is taught. There are “Promise Keepers” rallies out in Utah where attending Mormons are encouraged to go back to their churches to be better dads and husbands in them.

In many of those same gatherings Roman Catholic men are told to go back to their churches and do the same. And yet, the Roman Catholic church plainly teaches that faith in Christ alone is not sufficient to obtain justification for your sins and that if you teach such a thing you will be eternally condemned.

I’m not making that up. Listen to their own teachings from the council of Trent.

CANON XII.-If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's

sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified; let him be anathema.

CANON XIII.-If any one saith, that it is necessary for everyone, for the obtaining the remission of sins, that he believe for certain, and without any wavering arising from his own infirmity and disposition, that his sins are forgiven him; let him be anathema.

And yet, we are being told today that the Roman Catholic way of salvation is essentially the same as what an evangelical church teaches. I wish there were a more delicate way to put this, but I know that Paul would call this tendency in the church today, which is known as the ecumenical movement, as dining at the table of demons.

I could go on and on. And I certainly don't want to give the impression that I'm picking on psychology, pseudo-science, Mormonism or the Roman Catholic church, because there are myriad's of beliefs and practices which the church-at-large is embracing which would fall into the category of the table of demons.

But we also need to be willing to call such beliefs and practices what they are, all the while trying to help people out of them, including misguided Christians who have gotten caught up in them.

Our God is a loving and yet jealous God who desires that He and He alone be our all in all. We don't want to dishonor our Lord by reducing our Christian experience and life with Him in a way where we insist on bringing in the world's ways and views which would be contrary to His word.

Though no true Christian would ever consider consciously participating in the table of the Lord and the table of demons, the fact that Paul brings it up is evidence that even Christians can find themselves doing this in practice.

Our discernment comes from the Spirit of God who always directs us back to His word, and the apostle Peter would concur.

Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. (1Pet. 2:2-3)

The Lord is good. Let's dine at His table and commune with Him alone in the unity of the Spirit as we come together at His table of truth to be nourished and built up in our most holy faith.