

1Corinthians 10:14-20 "Sincere, United, and Steadfast in Faith"

1CO 10:14-17 "Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

Keep in mind that Paul has been dealing with self-indulgence in this chapter as he has given the nation of Israel as an example of how not to follow the Lord as they wandered in the desert for 40 years; a journey which should only have taken a few weeks.

And as we ended last week Paul exhorts these Corinthian believers to consider that there is no temptation or trial that has overtaken you, or seized you, that God can't deal with through His grace and strength if we will but trust and obey Him as we follow Him, because He will provide the way of escape and enable us to endure it.

Again, all of this is to remind us that our Lord has specifically chosen us and given us life that His life might shine through us, which means our lives are meant to glorify Him in every circumstance of our life.

And so, even our trials are not as much about us as they are about the God who desires to be magnified through us and will show His strength in us if we'll submit to Him.

But now Paul continues to make the connection with what he has previously shared with these people as we come to our text.

1CO 10:14 "Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry."

Notice that Paul uses the connective word, therefore. As I've said before whenever you're reading or studying the word of God and you come across the word therefore you need to go back and discover what the word therefore is there for.

In this case Paul is going back to the whole idea of being so caught up in our circumstances that we forget God and actually substitute Him for someone or something else. And what we see here in verse 14 is that this is actually tied to Paul's exhortation back in verse 7 which states, "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were..."

And here the reference is to Israel which made a golden calf as a way to physically make a connection to God who is spiritual in nature. And in their unbelief they chose to disobey God as they fashioned this calf and then attempted to worship the Lord through this idol.

It's not a coincidence that the first two commandments of the ten, given by Moses from God in the desert, should both deal with worshipping the Lord only in a proper and God-honoring way.

EXO 20:1-5 "And God spoke all these words: 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,..."

And Paul picks up on this theme, which most certainly can be found among God's people in a N.T. sense, and exhorts them to actually flee from this temptation of idolatry. This evokes the imagery we just got through studying on Thursday night in Genesis when Joseph literally fled from the temptation of Potiphar's wife as he ran out of her presence while she is still holding on to his coat.

Paul says, to flee from idolatry. Now keep in mind that idolatry in Paul's day, as he addresses this group of people in Corinth, was very real. The Gentile world was very religious, and they had all sorts of gods they worshipped. And especially in Corinth there were the temples that were dedicated to Aphrodite and others, and there were actually temple prostitutes assigned to those temples.

But Paul is not exhorting these believers to stop visiting the temple prostitutes, nor is he exhorting them to stop worshipping the false gods of these temples. This is not what these believers were blatantly involved in. What Paul means by all of this begins to unfold as we get further in the text.

But the implication is clear. To whatever extent we are tempted to worship the Lord in a way that is not according to His word we must flee from it; not entertain it. Remember, our Lord Jesus told us that we are to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, God's truth.

Now again, keep in mind that even though this is somewhat of a rebuke for these people, Paul still loves them with the love of Christ and only desires their good so that they might be better equipped to represent the God who loved them by sending His Son in their place to die for the penalty of their sin. Notice what he says here in verse one.

"My dear friends." This translation, according to the NIV is good but it does miss the affection Paul relays here as the original Greek really gives a more of a sense of love for them.

The phrase "dear friends" in the Greek is actually one word; a derivative of the word *agape*. It's the word *agapetos* and it means beloved, esteemed, worthy of love.

Paul loved these people because he knew how much Christ loved them and wanted them to grow in their relationship to Him. And simply because Paul has some hard things to say to them doesn't mean he loves them any less or that God loves them any less.

If God didn't love them and wasn't concerned for them He never would have inspired Paul to write this letter to them in the first place. But more than that God shows His love for us in His word as we take such a letter and consider God's mind and will for our lives as it relates to our own situations that might get in the way of our relationship with Him.

This is why we study the word of God. We study it so that our love for Him will grow more and more and that we might appreciate Him and His salvation in a way where our lives become a living testimony to the world, and with that we tell them the greatest news this world has ever known in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But let's move on.

1CO 10:15 "I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say."

Here Paul fully expects these people to discern the spiritual message he is about to deliver to them.

The NIV puts it, "I speak to sensible people..."

A more literal translation would be, "I speak to the wise..." And the inference here is that Paul is desiring for these people to understand that their lives are meant to look beyond themselves and realize that they are to reflect the Savior who has given them

life, and in that consideration they would be prudent and mindful of the real interest which is to represent Christ in this world.

Flee from idolatry, which has self at the center, and cling as wise people to the truth of God's word and His path for us. And now Paul is about to give us some examples of that.

1CO 10:16-17 "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

To understand this portion we need to define our terms so we know where Paul is going with this. Paul opens with the question which addresses the cup of thanksgiving, or as some of your translations have it, the cup of blessing. What is that?

Remember, the context has to do with worship. Fleeing from false worship and seeking to worship the true God in spirit and in truth as our lives show that true worship in everything we do in life.

The cup of blessing, as you might be aware, is another way of addressing that aspect of the Lord's Supper where we celebrate the shedding of Christ's blood on our behalf. This is precisely why Paul continues with that thought in verse 16.

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation, or sharing, in the blood of Christ?"

And in like manner Paul then addresses the body of Christ given up for us on Calvary when he says, "And is not the bread that we break a participation, or sharing, in the body of Christ?"

Now, why is Paul bringing up the Lord's Supper at this point in his letter? Well, because it is the one celebration of worship which every true believer participates in which distinguishes his unity to Christ and the rest of the members of that believing community.

The Lord's Supper is a spiritual meal in which "the Lord is the host and [we] are [His] guests." (Simon J. Kistemaker)

Remember when Jesus said that, "the kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son." (MAT 22:2) And then He went on to describe how the many who were invited chose not to come. And so He instructed His servants to go out and invite anyone who would be willing to come.

Many people, both good and bad, the text says, came. But one man did not come in wedding clothes and was thrown out. The wedding clothes of course was a reference to the fact that the only way we can enter into the kingdom of God is to be clothed in Christ, to have repented of our sin and trusted Him alone for our salvation.

And so, this banquet that Paul alludes to is a banquet which is for those who are clothed in Christ. This is why, for example, that the Lord's Supper is not extended to unbelievers. Some call this a "fencing of the table".

And what this means is that if you partake of the Lord's Supper, you are essentially saying that you are identified with Christ's substitutionary atonement for your sins as you have personally embraced Him by faith.

But, if you take the Lord's Supper, which is a clear sign of taking Christ by faith, and yet you have not embraced Him by faith as Lord and Savior, you essentially have signified that you belong to Him when you don't. And in that way you dishonor Christ and His church and blatantly show yourself a hypocrite to the things of God.

We can't have it both ways. We cannot participate in the things of Christ and yet deny Him as we do not place our faith in Him alone for our salvation. And that's exactly Paul's point when he mentions Israel in the desert identifying themselves with the golden calf as their god.

So, what is it? Is the true God your God, or the molten calf? And yet, people do this all the time. We usually see this around Christmas and Easter. All throughout the year they live unto themselves and could care less about the things of God and Christ, but come these two days all of a sudden they're Christians.

Paul is saying to these Corinthians that if you partake of the Lord's Supper, which is an outward expression of the inward reality that you have truly embraced Christ's sacrifice for the penalty of your sins, then you have identified yourself with a new Master and you no longer belong to yourself.

Rather, you are now identified with Christ and you belong to Him and the people of God who are with you in that body, or local church, who have also embraced Him by faith.

Now, let me add here that we need to be careful not to imply that simply by ingesting bread and wine, (or as in our case, grape juice), that we literally are ingesting the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's supper.

I was brought up Roman Catholic and was taught that when we celebrate the Mass that Jesus is literally dying once again and that through the agency of the Priest he is bringing this sacrificial gift to the people in the form of our Lord's literal body and blood through what is referred to as a bloodless sacrifice at the Mass.

And so, when we partook of the bread in the form of a wafer, we literally believed we were eating the body of Christ. I was an altar boy and back in the early 60's before the Vatican II council, when the Mass was said in Latin, the people would come up to the railing and kneel down.

And so, you would have this large group of people surrounding the altar, and the priest and the altar boy would go to each person and distribute the wafer. The altar boy's job was to place a golden plate under the chin of each person as they opened their mouth and received the wafer.

The reason for this was that if the priest missed the mouth or accidentally had the wafer slide off of their tongue we were there to catch it. This was to ensure that Jesus would not end up on the carpet.

But the Scriptures do not teach that the elements literally become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which in theological terms is called, transubstantiation. Our Lord does not die every time the Mass is celebrated. Our Lord's sacrifice was offered once and for all at Calvary. That's precisely what Paul told the Christians living in Rome, interestingly enough.

ROM 6:10 "The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."

To suggest that He continually dies is to deny His all sufficient death and resurrection some 2,000 years ago.

But it is in the Lord's supper, which is a remembrance of His sacrifice, and yet a participation in His fellowship as He is with us in our very midst, that we come together as the body of Christ and show our love and allegiance to Him and our love for one another.

1CO 10:17 "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

The imagery here is when our Lord Jesus broke one loaf of bread and from that one loaf distributed it among His disciples. From the one loaf, Jesus, we are all united and knit together as each of us participate in His death, as is seen when we each participate in this supper at the Lord's Table.

And so, unity is an essential characteristic of how each of us should be living as unto the Lord in an environment of serving and loving one another in the local body. When that unity is broken down, then what replaces it is a false picture of Christ, because division is not a substitute for unity.

If we say we belong to Christ then by definition we are united to Him and each other. Why? Because it is His family He has brought us into. When a family will not love each other, one has to question what kind of family that is.

Whatever else one might say about the Kennedy family, as they've gone through another tragedy with John Kennedy Jr. dying recently in that plane crash, along with his wife and sister-in-law, there is one thing which seems to distinguish them, and that is they're loyalty and apparent love for each other, even in tragedy.

The body of Christ is a family. And the local body especially is to show its loyalty first and foremost to the one who has placed us in that family as our heavenly Father has given us life through faith in Christ and has united us to His righteousness on our behalf. But we are also to show loyalty to one another in love and truth.

1JO 3:16,19 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 19 We love because he first loved us."

Part of our identity to Christ is the love He manifest to us and taking that love to other brothers and sisters in Christ as well as taking it to the rest of the world; not in some purely sentimental way, but in a way that shows love in truth and spirit as we obey our Lord and reach out to those who need God's truth.

But as Paul continues in our text he is going to bring this unity into focus as he continues his thought on what it means to be identified with something or someone.

1CO 10:18-20 "Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 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."

Verse 18 is an interesting one. If you've got a KJV bible or a NKJV bible you'll notice that your translation reads, "observe or behold Israel after the flesh." Now, the reason this is added is because in some of the Greek manuscripts from which we have our English bible, some of those manuscripts include that phrase, "after the flesh."

If this was part of the original manuscripts it would fit well in the context as Paul has been explaining how Israel sought after other gods and made idols as they were operating in the flesh, not in the spirit.

Either way, the point Paul is making in verse 18 should not be lost. If sinful Israel ate of the sacrifices at the altar, which is a picture of the priests of Israel offering the sacrifices of the people on the altar of God, then they are demonstrating that they are united to the covenant of God.

Here's the problem. If they were united to the covenant of God and they were acting in an unbelieving and rebellious way, as they brought their sacrifices, then they were not coming to the altar by faith, but in the flesh and there would be no remission of sin.

Remember, that all O.T. saints were saved the same way we are; faith in the one true God and His promises found in the Savior. This is the way Abraham was saved as he believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

And so, simply going through the motions does not make us a candidate for eternal life. Even in Israel, as they went through the motions, God made it clear that to obey in faith is better than sacrifice. This is exactly what the prophet Samuel told King Saul.

1SA 15:22-23 "But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."



Notice how the Lord identifies faith and obedience and how when we forsake the Lord by going our own way how that turns to something that displeases the Lord, even so far as to say that rebellion and arrogance are marks of unbelief.

1SA 15:23 "For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry."

This is what Paul is saying in our text concerning Israel. Yes they were chosen, yes they were favored by the Lord, but they were chosen to follow and obey the Lord, not to do their own thing according to their own thinking. That can turn to a form of idolatry which is really nothing more than replacing God with self or other things.

But the point Paul is making by saying in verse 18, that as Israel eats the sacrifices of the altar, which is the altar of God who has covenanted with these people, they also are identified with the sanctions of that covenant. Or to use Paul's language, they are sharers in or participants of that covenant.

And there were two sanctions, in the most basic sense. These are referred to as the dual sanctions of the covenant.

- 1) Obey God and be blessed.
- 2) Disobey God and suffer His displeasure.

These two aspects of the covenant really haven't changed from day one in the Garden of Eden after the fall of man into sin.

Remember what God told Adam?

GEN 2:16-17 "And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

The implication is that if you obey you will surely live. But in the case of these Corinthians Paul is trying to drive home the point that idolatry in any form, even among believers, is not acceptable, and will not be something that pleases God.

1CO 10:19-22 "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. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"

Finally, Paul is driving the point home. This all goes back to Christian liberties and how some of these Christians felt they were mature in the faith and able to look beyond the fact that meat sacrificed to idols was nothing, and they were right as Paul pointed out.

1CO 8:4,7 "So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. 7 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."

Some of these "mature Christians" took this liberty and in a sense were flaunting it as they felt comfortable to frequent some of the finer restaurants, if you will, in Corinth which were found in these pagan temples, where they served this meat sacrificed to idols.

And what Paul is saying is that it's true, there are no such things as idols, and there are no such things as sacrifices to idols which have any substance in them because there is only one God.

But then Paul goes a step further to show how, despite the fact that there are no idols, when we choose to participate in some questionable practice which involves any worship outside of God's prescribed worship, there is still something spiritual about it.

Verse 20 .... "the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons."

Paul is saying to these "mature Christians" in Corinth who are causing their less mature brothers and sisters in Christ to question what the connection is to pagan practices and their new faith in Christ, to consider the reality behind participating in this meal which was sacrificed to idols.

In other words, how does the world see your practices, who believes that idols are real? How does the world see your practices who believes that these gods are real? It might surprise you that though they are not offering their sacrifices to gods, they are offering to real spiritual entities.

Do you really want to be a part of that? Should we really be a part of that, knowing that you can't be in both camps and still faithfully

represent Christ? There's much I want to say on this and I was hoping to get to it this morning, but we'll have to pick up here next week.

But, I want us to consider how Christians can actually participate in the things of this world, some of which we may actually have Christian liberties in, and yet not consider how such liberties, when seen as rights, can actually promote the things of the enemy, things of demons, as Paul points out in our text.

Our God is a jealous God who is jealous for our love. Let's not disappoint Him.

Next week we'll look at what the table of demons means and how Christians today can find themselves at the table of demons.

COL 2:6-8 "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."