

1 Corinthians 10:15-22 The Cup of Blessing Falls Ch. PM 5/5/2024

The church in Corinth was involved in a fierce debate about meat that had been sacrificed to false idols. Paul responded by dividing the question into two parts.

First, should a Christian ever eat the food? Answer: it depends. Your brother's conscience is so worth defending that you should be willing to refrain from eating the food to avoid having your brother stumble in his faith.

Second, should a Christian attend banquets where meat is sacrificed to idols? Answer: no! No room for debate or discussion on this matter. When it came to idolatry and idol worship, the only appropriate response for a Christian was to flee.

This answer from Paul would have had a big impact on the church in Corinth. The feasts for false idols were big popular part of the culture in Corinth.

In fact, these feasts were a primary social outlet of those times. Any suggestion that they should stop attending these events would be met with disfavor. When they received the letter of 1 Corinthians, and when they read this passage, some in Corinth would have responded by muttering "Paul has gone too far this time. As long as we don't worship the idol, what harm is there to attending the feast?"

In verse 14, Paul wrote, "*My beloved*" as an unusual form of addressing them. "*My dear friends...*" It shows Paul's deep passion and emotion as he gave important counsel to good friends to take the right course of action. Back in chapter 6:18, Paul had written, "*Flee sexual immorality.*" And here, rather than about the marriage covenant with a spouse, this time about their spiritual covenant with God, Paul wrote in verse 13, that God is faithful to you to provide a way to escape temptation to be unfaithful to Him, "*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry!*"

Some Bible scholars have the impression that Paul got carried away here, and used his authority to make more rules than were necessary, just for the sake of making rules, or arbitrarily. So, we are not surprised to find Paul's flat warning in verse 14, "*flee from idolatry*" being followed up with Paul's reasons and explanations for the people.

So, what were Paul's reasons and explanations? That forms our sermon outline.

Since we belong to Christ in loyalty, we must not participate in false worship anytime, anywhere.

1. Participating leads to fellowshiping. (v.15-16)

Paul used a form of the word 'koinonia' four times in this passage. 'Koinonia' itself appears twice in verse 16, and is translated as participation. Another form of the word appears in verse 18 and is translated as participants. A third form of the word appears in verse 20 and is translated as participants. The

word *koinonia* refers to the fellowship of those who have things in common. For example, Christians observe this supper because we have certain things in common. 1) we all have been delivered from sin 2) we all have been made part of God's family by the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. This supper celebrates and commemorates these truths in two ways a) the cup representing the blood that Jesus shed for us, and b) the bread representing the body in which He suffered and bore the penalty for our sins.

Worship is serious. Both true worship and false worship are serious! Neither false worship of non-existent gods, nor true worship of the true and living God is to be taken lightly. There are only two kinds of worship: true worship and false worship. True worship brings us into contact with the true and living God, and invokes and invites God's presence with us. False worship brings us into the realm of Satan, and invokes and invites his presence!

2. Participating leads to identifying. (v.17-18)

Verse 17, "*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*"

Here Paul made an important point by equating the one bread with the one body. Since there is one bread and one body, consequently, what does it mean when a group of people drink of that cup and eat of that bread?

It means that each of those persons is a part of that one body! Their eating and their drinking is what identifies them as followers of Christ. Paul says that their eating and their drinking means that. Here in verse 17, Paul wrote that "...*we who are many, are one body...*" How? "*for we all partake...*" We partake of what? "...*we all partake of the one bread.*" It is our participating in The Lord's Supper that clearly marks us out as belonging to the Christian realm, belonging to the family of God, and anyone who sees our participating would be justified to assume that we are followers of Jesus Christ in our spiritual heart-commitments.

Paul made the same point again in verse 18, using the logic of the Old Testament sacrificial system. "*Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?*" What was the NT apostle Paul teaching the NT church in Corinth to understand about the OT priests who used to offer the sacrifices? The lesson was clear: the OT priests were allowed to take a portion of the sacrifices for their own use for meals. And anyone watching, who saw a man taking a portion of the sacrifice for his own use, would naturally assume that man was a priest. The warranted assumption would be that the man had permission to receive and consume this meat, because the man was a priest.

Do you see how clear is Paul's basic point, now reinforced? Since people are identified by that in which they participate, the Corinthians would certainly be assumed to be idolaters if they put in an appearance at an idol temple! Because that was true, it follows that believers must not attend a worship service of a false idol.

Application – we want to be identified with Christ, and yet we want to go places and do things that automatically and uniformly identify us with the world. We call this straddling the fence. It means having one foot in one yard, and reaching your other foot over the fence to be in another yard while retaining your first foot in the first yard.

Example from the life of King David. David led his men into the land of the Philistines, and the response of a Philistine leader is found in 1 Samuel 29:3, “*the commanders of the Philistines said, ‘What are these Hebrews doing here?’*” David was trying to be a Hebrew and David was also trying pass as a Philistine at the same time. Even the Philistines knew that was not effective, and did not fool anyone. Each person has to choose. Are you a Philistine or are you a Hebrew? Maybe you are leaving the Hebrew God to convert to becoming a Philistine?

Even if you think you are getting away with an evil practice, the people of the world are not fooled by you. They ask, “What are these Christians doing here?” Maybe you are leaving Christianity to convert to worldly paganism?

3. Participating leads to provoking the Lord! (v.19-22)

Verse 19, “*What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?*”

Verse 20, “*No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.*”

While the Lord’s Supper is clearly symbolical in nature, the drinking and eating are not merely mechanical experiences for the Christian. While we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are made aware again of what a great price the Lord has paid for us, and our hearts move toward Christ in love and adoration. The whole time while we are in the process of The Lord’s Supper, we are enjoying fellowship or communion with Christ and with others who also share our love for Christ. In other words, there is a spiritual reality behind The Lord’s Supper. While partaking of the simple elements, we are spiritually fellowshiping by faith with the real person of Jesus Himself.

Here at the end of 3 chapters about false worship, Paul brought up the subject of the Lord’s Supper, because it perfectly paralleled what was taking place in the false worship of idols. Even though idols were not really gods, there was still a spiritual reality of idolatry when people entered false worship; namely, the reality of demons. The demons were at work in two ways 1) the demons instigated idolatry and 2) the demons exerted an influence on the false worshippers themselves. Because those were both true, anyone who participated in a false worship service of a non-existent god, actually did open the door and did invite the demons to exert that influence in their lives.

Paul’s emphasis has a particular significance for our own time. Our society is overrun with false worship. There is interest in witchcraft, demon-worship, and

devil worship. Many of our fellow citizens dismiss all of this as innocent fun, because they say, demons don't actually exist. But the devil is real and so are demons. False worshippers fail to realize the truth that these activities are sinister. Everyone who gets involved in these activities is opening himself up to demonic influence.

Verse 21, *"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."*

The Christian is one who belongs to God. Through Christ's death on the cross, God purchased each of us believers to be God's own prized possession, and to live for His purposes. SI – just as a husband or wife will not tolerate their spouse sharing affection with anyone else, so it is with our relationship to God. God deserves all of our spiritual affections of our hearts, and God will not tolerate His people sharing with another what exclusively belongs to God.

Verse 22, *"Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?"* Since we truly belong to the Lord, if we try to give our allegiance to another god, we are, in effect, entering into a status of war with God. The only one who is in a position to risk a war with God is the person who is stronger than God. Since none of us is in that category of being stronger than God, we are wise to avoid provoking God. We are wise to stay away from all things that compete with God for our loyalty.

Conclusion: Our cup of blessing is Jesus Himself. We get Jesus!

One of the all-time greats in baseball was Babe Ruth. His bat had the power of a cannon, and his record of 714 home runs remained unbroken until Hank Aaron came along. The Babe was the idol of sports fans, but in time age took its toll, and his popularity began to wane. Finally the Yankees traded him to the Braves. In one of his last games in Cincinnati, Babe Ruth began to falter. He struck out and made several misplays that allowed the Reds to score five runs in one inning. As the Babe walked toward the dugout, chin down and dejected, there rose from the stands an enormous storm of boos and catcalls. Some fans actually shook their fists. Then a wonderful thing happened. A little boy jumped over the railing, and with tears streaming down his cheeks he ran out to the great athlete. Unashamedly, he flung his arms around the Babe's legs and held on tightly. Babe Ruth scooped him up, hugged him, and set him down again. Patting him gently on the head, he took his hand and the two of them walked off the field together.

If a man with flaws and faults like Babe Ruth can bring that sort of loyalty from a little boy, what sort of loyalty ought we have for Jesus, who has no flaws, has no faults, and has never let us down?

We cannot sing the praises Jesus only when Jesus does what we want Jesus to do. We are called to be loyal to Jesus. We cannot worship Jesus plus anything or anyone else. We worship Jesus when times are good, and when times

are bad, we allow ourselves to turn somewhere else for consolation? No. We have one God. We are called to worship God alone.

But what if we messed up? What if we trusted something else?

Answer: Jesus meets us with the cup of blessing in the middle of the ups and downs of our lives, inviting us to repent again and to drink again.

In the cup of blessing, we see that Jesus has remained faithful to us, even when we have been spiritually unfaithful to Him. Even though we have participated in false worship, and we have wandered from Jesus, He does not withhold the cup of blessing from us. Jesus has not halted the distribution of the cup of blessing to the church, because of our failings.

Jesus overcame our sins with his perfect living. Jesus had nothing for which He needed to repent, not sins of which Jesus was guilty. Yet Jesus was the One who suffered the consequences of our sin.

Jesus chose not to bypass the cup of judgment, the cup of curses and the cup of wrath for our sins, so that what is in our cup is only blessing. Jesus drank the bitter cup, so that our cup is sweet.

Romans 8:34-39, *“Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

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