

TITLE: THE SIN OF IDOLATRY

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-22

INTRO: This chapter has 3 main points: **1)** General exhortations to remain pure in everything (v. 1-13), **2)** specifically the sin of idolatry (v. 14-22), and **3)** making the right decision when the matter is optional (v. 23-33). Here in v. 14-22, Paul shows an example of idolatry going on around them, and commands that a Christian is **not** to participate.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF PARTICIPATION (v. 14-18):

A. Warning (v. 14-15)

(v. 14) *Wherefore* (because of the example of Israel's failure), *my dearly beloved* (Paul shows his deep concern for them), *flee* (run away) *from idolatry* (v. 13—escape). Don't have anything to do with it. Run away from it!

(v. 15) *I speak as to wise men; judge ye....* You're smart; you can understand what I'm about to say and judge it to be true.

B. Example of NT worship (v. 16-17)

(v. 16) *The cup...we bless, is it not the communion* (participation; fellowship) *of the blood of Christ? The bread...is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* In making this point, Paul shows the seriousness of what we do when we partake of the LS. We all, as His body, participate together in the remembrance of His sacrifice by symbolically eating His flesh and drinking His blood. We are aligning ourselves together with Christ.

(v. 17) *For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.* This is about unity: **1)** unity among all the brethren who are all participating in this memorial, and **2)** unity with Christ, our Head and Savior. It is a very special moment, the significance of which is being stated here in order to compare to what was happening among the Gentiles.

C. Example in OT worship (v. 18)

(v. 18) *Behold Israel after the flesh* (ethnic Israel – a reference to OT law/worship): *are not they which eat of the sacrifices* (i.e., priests) *partakers of* (fellowshipping with; communing with) *the altar?* This is the same idea as with the LS. The priests didn't just eat the meat of the sacrifice for the purpose of receiving a meal. By doing this they acknowledged God, His acceptance of the sacrifice, the worship that was occurring, and the entire Mosaic law and system of Judaism.

II. APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE (v. 19-22):

A. (v. 19-20a) *Is the idol anything? Is that which is offered in sacrifice to idols anything?* This is the same topic of **ch. 8** – eating meat offered to an idol. In ch. 8, he said it didn't matter whether or not you ate it, since the idol is nothing. But don't do it if it causes a problem for a brother. Here he confirms that. The idol is nothing (just a piece of wood). The sacrifice is nothing (just a piece of meat). **But** does this mean that they could participate in the idol worship, since the idol was nothing?! Of course not!

(v. 20) **BUT, the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils (demons), and not to God.** Here we see the two (and only two) objects of this worship: **God or devils!**

1. Idolatry is devil worship, in a sense. Surely the Gentiles weren't *purposely* sacrificing to devils! But this is what Paul says they're doing. If you're not doing it for God, you're doing it for devils (there's no in between).
2. Today, our worship is our "sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips" (**Heb 13:15**). If it's not to God, it's to devils. And if it's not done **God's way**, then it's not accepted (**John 4:23-24** – worship must be according to truth). What does this say about any worship that is offered to God according to **man's ways**?

B. (v. 20b-22) *I don't want you to have fellowship with devils!*

1. Obviously this is wrong regardless of whether or not you're a Christian. But, it seems that they thought it was okay (lawful) since they were Christians. Either they were doing it in a pluralistic way (worshipping God *and* the idol), or just carelessly (not really worshipping the idol, but not concerned with how they looked in doing so).
2. (v. 21) *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils* (or *partake of the table* – eat the offerings). This is inconsistency. God is light, and in Him is **no darkness at all** (**1 John 1:5**).
3. (v. 22) *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?* In other words, worshipping an idol (or *any* worship other than true worship of God) provokes God to jealousy! Are we going to purposely do something that will stir up the Lord against us? How strong are we? This is a firm warning about participating in the worship of the idol.

III. MODERN APPLICATIONS:

A. Actually participating in idolatry

1. Although there are those in the world today who still worship idols in similar ways as what Paul is dealing with in Corinth, it isn't something that is prevalent around us.
2. What is prevalent? Worship of money, sex, sports, entertainment! Just because we don't physically bow down to it or offer a sacrificial animal to it, does that mean it's *not* idolatry? **Anything** that's more important to you than God is an idol!
3. The only thing that is acceptable is worship to God, and only in the way God prescribed. If what we are doing does not meet *His* criteria, then it is no different than idol worship. Why? Because who is pleased with it, God or Satan?

B. Fellowshiping those who participate in idolatry

1. In the last part of this chapter Paul is going to show that, even if the Corinthian brethren weren't actually acknowledging the idol, and even though it's okay to eat the meat, it would still be best **not** to do so if it's going to **1)** damage another's conscience, or **2)** damage the church's influence.
2. Fellowship & influence are important, yet overlooked. Sound Christians & congregations need to be aware of their influence and how it is damaged by their fellowship with brethren or congregations who have fallen away (**2 Jn 9-11; Eph 5:11**).

CONCLUSION: God is exclusive! He desires 100% of our love & devotion. We need to be careful of **1)** the importance we place on worldly things (don't make them idols), and **2)** not to damage our influence on the church or the lost by fellowshiping things & people we shouldn't.