

False Worship – 1 Cor 10:14-22

1 Cor 10:14-22; Having warned us about complacency and the sin of idolatry in the first part of the chapter, Paul now applies it to the situation at hand

To the false worship of idols in the pagan temples of Corinth; Saying in v14 . . .
Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? 19 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 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. 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. 22 Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Before we get started, let me forewarn you that some of this is calculus – very content heavy and very detailed

So you're going to have to put your thinking caps on to connect the dots

That said, Paul's entire point is stated in 3 simple words fr v14 – *flee from idolatry*; IOW **Have nothing to do with false worship (v14)**

That's the point of the entire paragraph

Get away from, stay away from, and have nothing to do with – false worship

And I say false worship instead of idolatry, b/c we tend to only associate idolatry with statues – which is far too limiting

Idolatry, when you get right down to it, is false worship of *any* kind

It doesn't have to be a stone, or a piece of wood . . .

It could be an idea, aspiration, goal, philosophy, habit, inclination, action, occupation, sport, person, or pastime

Anything or anyone that occupies a place of primary focus in your life, to the exclusion of God; That's idolatry

Or, in terms of worship . . .

- **Idolatry is worshipping something or someone other than the true God, in the true way**

Whether it's a tangible idol or an intangible one; Real or imagined

If a thought or practice or religion represents God wrongly, or not at all – it's false worship; and therefore idolatry

Which is pretty easy to see if the object of your worship isn't *God*

Like in Buddhism or Hinduism where *actual* idols are worshipped, and in no way are meant to represent the God of the Bible – it's idolatry, and false worship

Or Islam, where falsehoods about Jesus and the Trinitarian nature of God, replace the truth about him; It's idolatry and false worship . . .

B/c it worships something or someone other than the true God, in the true way

And the list goes on and on

Including *cults*, where often times the nature of Jesus is compromised, or his authority claimed by another, or they're worshipping in a false, unbiblical way

And the *occult*, where black magic, witchcraft, and supernatural phenomena are sought
Often through things like Ouija boards, Tarot cards, palm reading, and astrology
Much of which is simply the exploitation of the gullible, but some, the work of forces *other* than God; Either way, it's idolatrous and false; And easy to see

- A bit more difficult to see, and especially *accept* as false worship and idolatrous – are efforts to worship the true God in a false way; That too is idolatry

Like when the Israelites made a golden calf at the base of Mt Sinai, the incident we talked about a few weeks ago; Remember that?

What we didn't talk about is that it was an effort to worship the true God, in a false way

Ex 32:4-5 says – *And he [Aaron] received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"*

Notice even in that, they worshipped falsely – attributing the acts of God in bringing them out of Egypt, to someone else

But the next verse is the one that clues us in to fact, that efforts to worship the true God in the wrong way, is false worship

V5 – *When Aaron saw this [referring to the golden calf and their worship of it], he built an altar before it. And Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."*

Notice that's *LORD*, in all caps; As in Yahweh, the one true God

That's how his proper name in Hebrew, is translated in English

The point being, that Aaron was leading the people to worship God, the *true* God, in a false way – through an idol *****

It was syncretism at its worst – combining truth with error, to get false worship

And God wanted nothing to do with it; He didn't accept it

Jesus said in **John 4:23**, that – *true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*

In *spirit* – regardless of location . . .

And in *truth* – according to who he is, and *how* we are to worship

God is seeking *true* worshippers, who will worship him in the *true* way

Which is all the more reason to flee *idolatry*, and have nothing to do with false worship of any kind *****

- Like when saints of old are prayed to and sought for help – that's trying to worship the true God in a false way; And it's idolatry
Or how about religions that add to the Scriptures – sometimes via tradition, and sometimes with books of their own; Like Jehovah's Witnesses, or Mormonism
Once again, examples of idolatry – where they're *trying* to worship the true God, but doing so in a false way

And then you have apostate gatherings, that I won't even *call* churches

Who reject the authority of the Scriptures, deny the deity of Christ, or discard his substitutionary atonement – like Unitarian Universalism

It's false worship, and you should have nothing to do with it; That's the point

And if you're looking for reasons, Paul gives us 2 very compelling ones; The first, is . . .

Because false worship is demonic (v15-20)

Have nothing to do with false worship, b/c it's demonic

That's the conclusion he comes to in v19-20 where he says . . .

What do I imply then? [IOW after making the case, what does he mean?] *That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?*

[No, he settled that in chapter 8 – idols are nothing in and of themselves, and the food offered to them is no different than any other food]

20 No, [he says] *I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.*

What pagans, or unbelievers, sacrifice as an act of worship, in word *or* deed, they offer to demons – fallen angels, due to their rebellion against God in ages past . . .

Who do the bidding of Satan

Who do everything they can to deceive people, and suppress the truth about God

Destroying and killing them as John 10:10 says – without them even knowing it sometimes; *Thinking* they're worshipping God, when they're not

- That's nothing new – that idol worship or false worship, is demonic
Moses told the ancient Israelites all the way back in Deut 32:17, that when they went astray, *they sacrificed to demons*
And the Psalmist said (**Ps 106:36-37**) that instead of destroying their enemies like they should have . . .

They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons

Once again, indicating that false worship, is demonic; It was then, and is now *****

- Now, does that mean that all false worship is *equally* demonic? No; I wouldn't say that
Some forms it seems, require only an initial *impulse* of deception or delusion, but then is left to the wayward heart of man
Other forms simply require the blinding of unbelievers by Satan as 2 Cor 4:4 says, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel – in which case false worship abounds
Nor are demons all-powerful, all-knowing, or everywhere present – they're limited in both number *and* ability

So no, not all forms of false worship are equally demonic

But regardless of the level, if God isn't worshipped, or he's worshipped in a false way – then to some extent it's demonic

No matter how well meaning or innocent the participants; That's nothing new

- What *is* new, is that false worship is a *participation* with demons
Which is why Paul says he doesn't want us to have anything to do with it
20b – *I do not want you to be participants with demons* he says
Participants, as in partners and sharers; It's a form of the word *koinonia*, from which we get fellowship – belonging together

So *participants* here, denote people who identify with demonic ways, and join in their worship, whether they know it or not

People in fellowship with demonic forces, by virtue of their false worship

And to help us see that, Paul lays out two analogies in v16-18, describing the participation and fellowship with *God*, that happens in *true* worship; The first of which is . . .

• Analogy #1 – The Lord's Table

That's analogy #1, to help us understand the relationship betw false worship, and demons

V15 – *I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.*

IOW you're smart, see if this makes as much sense to you as it does to me

The cup of blessing that we bless – referring to the cup that Jesus used at the last supper, to symbolize his death and the covenant it guarantees . . .

The cup of blessing that we bless [that we affirm as God-ordained and right], *is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?*

The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

And then he adds – *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*

- Now, there are 3 truths here, that Paul points out in order to support his conclusion in v20, that false worship is a participation with demons

#1 from v16a, is that – Drinking at the Lord's table shows that *we* are *participants*, in the forgiveness *Christ* offers, through his death

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?

Is it not an identification and association with the blessings of Christ's death? It is

When we drink the cup, it's an act of worship that conveys our *belief* in who he is and what he's done, and our *thankfulness* for the blessing of salvation it secured

So here's the analogy – just as true worship is a participation with Christ, false worship is a participation with demons; an identification and association with *them*

#2 from v16b, is that – *Eating* at the Lord's table shows that we are *participants* in the benefits of Christ's *sacrifice* on our behalf

The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

An identification and association, with his sacrifice on our behalf? It is

Yet another support for his analogy, that just as *true* worship is a participation with *Christ*, *false* worship is a participation with *demons*

#3 from v17, is that – Eating at the Lord's table, shows we are participants in the church, belonging together in mutual partnership

Because there is one bread [Paul says], *we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*

IOW just as the pieces of the loaf are a part of the whole – so are we, a part of the body, the body of Christ

One, by virtue of the fact that we believe in the same truths, receive the same salvation, have the same Spirit, and worship the same Lord

There's a Holy Spirit connection among us, b/c we all partake of the same bread of life, Jesus, and show it by eating the same bread of communion

Once again implying, that there's also a *demonic* connection, among those who worship falsely

3 truths from the *first* analogy, to show that participation in false worship, means fellowship with demons

The second analogy comes from . . .

• **Analogy #2 – OT Sacrificial Meals**

V18 – *Consider the people of Israel* [or literally, Israel according to the flesh]

Which is Paul’s way of distinguishing between ethnic Israel, consisting of unbelieving

Jews – and true, spiritual Israel, consisting of believers, the church

And I think he does so, b/c he doesn’t want us to think that such practices like sacrificial meals, are still a legitimate means of worship like they were before Christ

With that in mind then, he says – *Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?*

IOW do they not believe in what it means, and identify with those who take part, and seek to share in the blessings of the covenant for which it stands? They do

It’s *misguided* on this side of the cross, but that’s what they’re doing

And by way of analogy, the same is true of those who participate in rituals of false worship – they ascribe to the beliefs, identify with the participants . . .

And knowingly or unknowingly, worship demons – *what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God* (20a)

It’s his second analogy, to say the same thing, and prove the same point, as he did with the first

So it’s no wonder Paul ends with such a strong prohibition and warning in v21

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.

And then he says it again in a different way – *You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.*

IOW you can’t have it both ways; That’s the second reason for his main point

Have nothing to do with false worship, b/c false worship is demonic . . .

And you can’t have it both ways (v21-22)

You can’t fellowship with both God and demons at the same time – at least not from

God’s perspective; The two are mutually exclusive; Inherently incompatible

I think that’s why Paul says – *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.*

It’s not just that you shouldn’t, but that you can’t (**2 Cor 6:14-16**)

- *For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?* It’s a rhetorical question from Paul in 2 Cor 6, with an implied answer of “none”

Or what fellowship has light with darkness? [None] *15 What accord has Christ with Belial* [a name for Satan]? [None]

Or what portion [i.e. what aspect of Christian fellowship] *does a believer share with an unbeliever?* [None] *16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols?* [None]

God *cannot*, accept or tolerate true and false worship at the same time *****

- Nor will he share his glory with another – his rightful praise and adoration

Is 42:8 says – *I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.*

You can’t have it both ways; And trying to do so, flirts with disaster *****

Which is why Paul says in v22 – *Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?*

IOW are you nuts? Do you think you can resist God’s discipline and retribution?

I don’t think so; So why provoke him in the first place?

Why spread your worship around and risk his righteous jealousy, like a wayward wife does with her husband?

It’s not worth it

It’s not worth the temporary satisfaction of exploring other “options” or religions, while God waits in the wings

It’s not worth the short-lived pleasure of feeling like you’re in control and can worship as you please

And it’s not worth the risk of allowing some-*one* or some-*thing*, to take God’s rightful place of worship in your life – stealing his glory and diminishing your passion

You can’t have it both ways – and it’s not worth trying