

Flee Idolatry: Communion with Jesus Christ Alone

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-22

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Heidelberg Catechism question 75 asks, “**How is it signified and sealed to you in the Lord’s Supper that you partake of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross and all His benefits?**” The answer to the question tells us that when we partake of the Lord’s Supper by faith two promises are signified and sealed to us. The answer reads; “**Thus: that Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and to drink of this cup in remembrance of Him, and has joined therewith these promises: first, that His body was offered and broken on the cross for me and His blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup communicated to me; and further, that with His crucified body and shed blood He Himself feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, as certainly as I receive from the hand of the minister and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, which are given me as certain tokens of the body and blood of Christ.**” Partaking of the bread and cup signifies the reality of Christ’s death on the cross was for “**me.**” His body was really broken and His blood was really shed for me, affirming the “**certainty**” of the historical events, both past and present.

Further, we spiritually “**partake of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross and all His benefits,**” as certainly as the broken bread and wine

are given to us. In these tokens of the bread and wine we have a visible sign and seal of the invisible reality that we are partakers of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, which has been embraced by all believers by true faith, having been united with Christ in all His sufferings and death. In other words, we embrace with believing hearts that **“ . . . by the working of the Holy Spirit, . . . all His sufferings and obedience are as certainly our own, as if we ourselves had suffered and done all in our own person ”** (Heidelberg Catechism #79). The working of the Holy Spirit in the believer is the reason that as we eat of the bread and drink of the wine at the Lord’s Table by faith, it is said to be **“the communion of the body and the blood of Christ.”** Not that the partaking of the bread and wine is the cause of that communion of the body and blood of Christ, but that in partaking of the bread and wine, we are signifying outwardly that work of the Holy Spirit in us, whereby we have been made to partake of that one sacrifice of Christ on the cross, having been united with Him by the Holy Spirit. **More importantly,** this invisible and real union between Christ and the believer is based upon the truth taught in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 17.

Moreover, our union with Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit is the basis for our assurance that not only has the one atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross and its benefits have been applied to us, but it also assures us that we, by faith, are being fed and nourished by Him all the days of our lives until we die, or until He comes again on the last day. **In fact,** as we partake of the bread and wine by true faith, our hearts are assured that

what we have embraced with believing hearts belong to us; that is, through “**all the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ,**” we have obtained “**the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.**” Yet, our union in Christ has a certain affect on us that we seldom consider in our daily lives, which is brought out for us in the passage that we read this morning in 1 Corinthians; specifically, verses 14 through 22.

In this passage, we are told that communion with two opposing persons is not possible. **It is like being a friend to one person and at the same time being a friend to the enemy of that person.** One is either united to Christ or to demons, but not both. However, we live in a time when it is fashionable or politically correct to be **[quote/unquote]** “**tolerant**”. Yet, Scripture never tells us to be tolerant of those teachings that are contrary to biblical teachings, or to have communion with those who oppose Christ, much less participate in the ungodly activities of those who do not believe in Christ. **On the contrary!** We are not to tolerate false teachings in our midst, nor those who hold to false teachings unrepentantly. We must follow the godly protocol given to us from 2 Timothy 2:24-26 in correcting those who hold to unbiblical teachings, or living in sin. Then, when there is no repentance we follow the biblical process prescribed by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17. **Nonetheless,** there are many so-called Christians, whose lives reflect more of the ideas and activities of the world than they do of Jesus Christ and His word. By doing so, they are engaging in idolatry. **However,** in verse 14 of our text, the Lord tells the Corinthians, and us also, to “**. . . flee from idolatry.**” Flee

the evil things of this world that we lust after: flee sexual immorality; flee testing the Lord; flee the constant complaining. Those were the things that the Old Testament church did to provoke God to jealousy, as we see from the first thirteen verses of this Chapter.

The bottom line of those first thirteen verses is that though the Children of Israel had been baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all eating of the same spiritual food and drinking of that same spiritual Rock, which was Christ; they, **nonetheless**, rebelled against God in the wilderness embracing the ways and customs of those who opposed the Lord, making idols of golden calves, saying that they were the Lord God that brought them out of the land of Egypt. They committed sexual immorality, and then tested the Lord, by taking for granted the Lord's goodness, mercy, and grace. **Further**, they complained against Him when they encountered various trials in the wilderness. They despised His blessings and rebelled against Him in unbelief, **rather than being thankful to the Lord**, who delivered them from their bondage in Egypt, destroying the army of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and providing for their every need, having tasted of the spiritual food and water He so graciously provided. **Then**, to add insult to injury, they set up idols, rather than trusting the Lord to provide for their every need, as He had been faithfully doing, including physical food and water. **As a result**, the bodies of that generation of Israelites were scattered all over the wilderness and did not see the Promise Land. The apostle then explains why he reminded us of the rebellious people in the wilderness. We are told that we are to **learn from that example as a**

warning to us. Therefore, as those who are in Christ, we are also not to take for granted God's goodness and grace toward us; not rebel against Him, as unbelievers, who, not really knowing the Lord, turn Him into an idol, perceiving Him in a way that is not revealed to us in His word, but rather perceiving Him after our own imaginations and thoughts. This brings us to our text this morning, which begins by telling us to flee idolatry, as we just read in verse 14 of our text.

However, we need to understand what idolatry is. Before we start to think about wood, stones, or some other material shaped into a creature, or human figure to which a person bows down and serves, we need to think about idolatry more broadly and deeply. Drawing from the Ten Commandments, we would define idolatry in the following way: **"Idolatry is to conceive or have something else in which to place our trust instead of, or besides, the one true God who has revealed Himself in His Word."** This definition is taken from Heidelberg Catechism #95.

From this definition of idolatry we see that anything in which we place our trust instead of, or along side of, the one true God, in whatever shape, form, or even idea is idolatry. **Accordingly,** it is inconceivable that anyone during his or her lifetime has not engaged in idolatry in one form or another, except Jesus Christ, of course. **In fact,** idolatry may take the form of having an incorrect view of who Jesus Christ is, and His mission, as we learn from 1 John 4:1-6. Even, as Christians, often times, we engage in idolatry, putting our trust in something or someone other than our one

true God and Savior, Jesus Christ. **Beloved, this cannot be!** – Idolatry must be turned away from as soon as the Lord exposes the idols of our hearts; and for good reason, as we learn from the rest of the passage in 1 Corinthians Chapter 10.

In verse 15, we read, **"I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."** Paul says essentially, **"I am going to now talk to you, Corinthians, as though you are wise, true believers in Christ. I'm going to let you decide if idolatry is an acceptable practice for you."** It is evident from Chapter 8 of this epistle that the Corinthians partook of meat offered to idols, and so they did not think it was an issue, since they knew that an idol was nothing. Though they were correct in their premise, they were wrong in the conclusion they drew in practicing idolatry, and also being united in Christ. **The issue** is whether we can continually put our trust in anything or anyone else, instead of or along side of, Jesus Christ and be a true believer in Him!

Just as Paul was saying to the Corinthian saints to follow his inspired reasoning, so also let us follow the reasoning of the Lord revealed in the verses that follow. **This leads us to verses 16 and 17,** which teach us that we have been made partakers of Christ's death on the cross, having been united to Him and have communion with Him; have fellowship with Him by true faith alone through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Unlike the Old Testament church, which was baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea by covenant; true believers are baptized into Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit applying the blood of Jesus to them, indwelling them, and making them anew in the spirit. By this mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit they become partakers of His death and members of His body. This invisible operation of the Holy Spirit is signified and sealed to the believer as he or she by faith partakes of the bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's death on his or her behalf. **Yet,** there is more to partaking of the Lord's Supper than signifying the believer's union with Christ, it also signifies the believer becoming a member of the one body of Christ, and thus united to all true believers by faith.

We see this in verse 17 of our text in 1 Corinthians, where it says, "**For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.**" As we partake of the one bread in the Lord's Supper, we are signifying that though we are many we have been not only united to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, but we are also united to one another by that same Spirit. **How do we know this?** "**We are all partakers of that one bread**"; that is, the Bread of Life, which is Jesus Christ. This is a reference to Jesus' discourse in John Chapter 6, which began with verse 25. It is in that discourse, where Jesus tells us that He is the Bread of life; He is that One Bread from which all true believers are made alive, nourished to eternal life, and made members of the one body of Jesus Christ, the true universal and spiritual Church, which we learn also from Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 11 to the end of that Chapter.

When we partake of the Lord's Supper we are expressing outwardly what has taken place inwardly, spiritually; **that is**, our union with Christ, whereby we have been made partakers of His one sacrifice; spiritually eating, as it were, by faith, the one sacrifice upon the altar of the cross. **This was also true** when a person in the Old Testament partook in not only the sacrifices made in accordance with the Old Testament Law, but also sacrifices made to idols.

We learn from verse 18 of our text, "**Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?**" The composition of the Greek language in this question requires an affirmative answer; **yes**, those who ate of the sacrifices made under the Old Testament Law were partakers of the altar, they fellowshiped in the altar embracing the sacrifice of the altar as belonging to them. This was true not only in obedience to the Old Testament Law; it was also true in the idolatry that they committed, which is the point that is being made in this passage.

When the people of Israel after the flesh, **not the spiritual Israel, according to faith**, ate of the sacrifices made to idols they became partakers of the altar, which was not consecrated to the one true living God, but to a idol made according to the imaginations of men. It meant that they received and accepted that sacrifice as being their own for whatever reason the sacrifice was made, whether for protection, for a good

crop, or for the atonement of their sins. They put their trust in that idol, instead of and in many cases, along side of the true God.

This being true, we need to remember, as we continue through this passage, that in verse 19, an idol is nothing and sacrifices made to idols are nothing. **In other words**, putting one's trust in an idol is worthless, and the sacrifice made to an idol will have no benefit. In fact, from verse 20 we learn that what is sacrificed is sacrificed, not to God, but rather to demons. This is a reference to when the Israelites made the golden calves in the wilderness and worshipped them saying they were the Lord, who delivered them from Egypt and opened up the Red Sea so that they were able to walk across on dry land. **However**, the Lord declared to them through Moses in Deuteronomy 32, "**They made sacrifices to demons, not God**" (v. 17). By partaking of the sacrifices to demons they were fellowshiping with demons. **Today**, sacrifices are made to demons with all sorts of names; power, money, Allah, Vishnu, Buddha, Osiris, Isis, humanism, naturalism, the so-called American Dream, or some other god of someone's imagination, including the technology god of A.I. Even all the various forms of sexual immorality, including transgenderism, gender identity, homosexuality; sacrifices are being made to gods of the 'woke' movement and cancel culture ideology. All of these things are idolatry; since they all involve some form of covetousness, which is idolatry, as we learn from Colossians 3:5.

Thus, when we engage in idolatry, we are fellowshiping with demons, as we put our trust in anything, instead of and along side of, the one true God and Savior, Jesus Christ. When we take our eyes off of Jesus Christ, to look elsewhere for our comfort and assurance in this life or the life to come, we are falling under the influence of demons, which are inducing us to worship an idol from the imaginations of our minds. **Moreover,** their inducements are very powerful – for they cater to our sin nature, which we, as true believers, fight against by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit all the days of our lives.

With these truths in mind we are able to understand, as wisdom tells us, we cannot partake in the Lord's Table and at the same time unrepentantly partake in idolatry, which is what we learn from verse 21 of our text. **By participating in idolatry, in whatever form it may take, we are eating at the table of demons.** And as believers in Christ, this is not possible, **"you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons,"** as it says in verse 21 of our text. When a believer in Jesus Christ eats of the bread and drinks of the wine at the Table of the Lord, he or she is testifying that he or she is one with Jesus Christ. **If a believer is one with Jesus Christ, how can they at the same time be united to demons, to be in fellowship with them, His enemies?**

Is it wise to put our trust in Christ, where it ought to be, or to put it in something or someone else, which is to seek to be one with demons, to fellowship with demons? **It cannot be both.** Jesus said in Luke 16:13,

“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Or in the context of 1 Corinthians, **“Judge wisely, you cannot serve God and demons.”**

If anyone who professes faith in Jesus Christ decides to practice that which God says, he cannot do, then that person is demonstrating that he or she is not really united to Christ. **Having said that;** we need to keep in mind, the Lord is not talking about falling into idolatry in a moment of weakness, but as an on-going unrepentant practice of idolatry one’s trust is placed in something or someone other than the true and living God, or in addition to Him. **If that is the case, let the warning in verse 22 of our text ring loud in one’s ears,** which is in the form of a question: **“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”** Just as in the wilderness, when the children of Israel provoked the Lord to jealousy with their idolatry, so also we provoke the Lord to wrath when we seek to partake in the Lord’s Supper and partake in idolatry. This is to partake in the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner; to eat and drink judgment to ourselves, as we learn from 1 Corinthians 11:27 and following.

The true believer in Christ will seek to please the Lord in all that he or she does; which, when done by faith, will please the Lord (Hebrews 11:6). On the other hand, to put one’s trust in something or someone else, instead of or besides the Lord Jesus Christ; it will provoke Him to anger; **AND who is able to stand against the Lord?** Or, as it says in our text,

“Are we stronger than He?” So let us take care as we partake of the Lord’s Table today that each of us do so with singleness of mind, forsaking all forms of idolatry with humble and contrite hearts and partake at the Lord’s Table by faith, testifying of our union with Jesus Christ, and thus a partaker of His death for the atonement of our sins.

Let’s hear the word of warning in the Epistle to the Hebrews and reassure our hearts that Jesus Christ alone is the one who saves, whereby we have the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life; who nourishes us by His word and Spirit; the Holy Spirit, who mysteriously united us to Christ, and united us to one another having made us members of His one body, washing us with the blood and making us alive from being dead in our trespasses and sins. **Reading from Hebrews Chapter 12, beginning with verse 22**, we find these words of warning: **“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.**

And this *word*, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God *is a consuming fire*" (vs. 22-29). That "**consuming fire**" will be the eternal fire of hell for all who refuse to repent of their unbelief and idolatry. This call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is not just for us in partaking of the Lord's Supper; it is a call to sinners everywhere, to all of mankind; for salvation is in other name under heaven whereby men must be saved.

Beloved in the Lord, Pray that God will fill you with the Holy Spirit, to convict you and strengthen you to flee any form of idolatry that you may be harboring in your heart and not take for granted God's grace and mercy. **Then,** by that grace and goodness of God look with a repentant heart to the Lord Jesus Christ alone putting your trust in Him alone for all things in life and in death; forsaking all other things or people, so that you don't provoke God to anger. **Further,** by God's grace through faith serve Jesus Christ alone in reverence and godly fear, according to God's word alone in the power of the Holy Spirit; for this is the only acceptable form of worship, whereby we commune at the table of Lord, and none other; **and by doing so,** we are assured in our hearts that Jesus Christ has come and dined with us and is nourishing us to everlasting life to the glory of God – **to Whom belong all glory, honor, wisdom and power, forever.**

AMEN!