

MESSAGE TITLE: The Lord's Supper, part 1

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 10:14-17

KEY TRUTH

The Lord's Supper is an expression of our participation in Christ's saving work on the cross and our fellowship within His body, the church.

GETTING STARTED

We live in an age of distraction. We are pulled in many different directions by technology, social media, friends, work, and hobbies. While none of these things are inherently evil, they can easily distract us from what is most important. God created us to love, worship, and enjoy Him (Isa. 43:7; Deut. 6:13; Phil. 3:1). When we elevate anything to the place of God, that thing becomes an idol. By looking at Paul's warning to the Ephesians believers, we will be challenged to acknowledge our own idols and turn our hearts back to the Lord who made us for a relationship with Himself and with other believers. Paul encourages believers to fight against the lure of idolatry by considering the significance of the Lord's Supper. Both the cup and the bread remind us that God has connected us to others in the body of Christ. Just as Jesus denied Himself to serve others, so God calls us to consider the needs of others above our own needs. Idolatry has no place in genuine fellowship with other believers who share in the blood and body of Christ.

OBSERVATION

Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-17.

The apostle wrote his letter to the Corinthians to address issues that had arisen in their church and to help them know what is involved in living for Christ. One of the issues these believers struggled with was idolatry, because Corinth was a hub for idol worship and all it entailed.

Because of the seriousness of idolatry, Paul told these Christians to "flee" from it. What does fleeing from a particular sin involve?

What makes idolatry such an offensive sin against God?

What do we communicate to God when we worship something in His place?

Paul's basic advice to the Corinthian Christians was simple but dramatic: flee from idolatry. On several occasions, Paul instructed his readers to "flee" from sin when he saw that they were in grave danger (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22). Idolatry is a serious matter. Believers should never flirt or toy with it. Idolatry looks different in our culture than it did for the Corinthians; we don't bow before statues or offer sacrifices in temples. But we are no less guilty of idolatry than they were. In fact, the idols in our culture are much harder to recognize, because they often take the shape of the everyday—relationships, possessions, job security, and so on.

In verses 15-17, Paul compared idolatrous festival meals to the Lord's Supper. What sets the Lord's Supper apart from the important meals in other religious practices?

What was Paul referring to in verses 16 and 17 when he mentioned the cup and the bread?

What does 'participation in the blood of Christ' mean?

What do eating the bread and drinking the cup symbolize?

How does observing the Lord's Supper express unity with other believers?

What is the significance of observing the Lord's Supper in a community of believers?

Paul reminded his readers about the significance of taking the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper together and the unifying work that action has on a body of believers. Because all believers are in spiritual union with Christ, all believers share spiritual union with one another in him. Paul assumed a similar spiritual effect also took place between the demons and the worshipers in the idols' temples, and he forbade participation in pagan ceremonies as a result. We run into a similar problem when we do things like encourage or join in the pursuits of wealth and power, two modern-day idols that are prominent in our society.

APPLICATION

We may not struggle with serving multiple gods, but what are some modern-day idols people worship? How do these idols impact our relationship with God?

Read Colossians 3:5-10. Paul identifies different expressions of idolatry in this passage. What does he tell us to do when we encounter idolatrous attitudes? Have you put to death such attitudes and actions in your own life?

Apparently, some believers were eating meals in idols' temples, and Paul used the Lord's Supper as a reminder for them of what they were condoning by doing so. What are some ways we may condone idolatry today without thinking about it as such? Ask the Lord to grant you repentance of idolatry.

Idolatry amounts to a worship of self – a focus on the object of one's desires. How might observing the Lord's Supper help us fight against the idolatry of self-centeredness? The Lord's Supper leads us to consider the body of Christ.

PRAYER

Ask God to help you understand how you are to live for Him amid other religions and idolatrous practices. Press into God's presence for help fighting against idolatry. Thank Him for the picture of fellowship we enjoy with God and other believers when we observe the Lord's Supper. We are not alone! God has connected us to one another in the body of Christ.

COMMENTARTY NOTES

10:14 This is the point toward which Paul has been moving throughout chapter 10. The Corinthians cannot participate in idolatry and then think that they will receive eternal life on the last day.

10:16 Paul refers to the cup of the Lord's Supper. Jesus gave thanks for the cup. The earliest Christian observance of the Lord's Supper imitated this custom. Participation sometimes refers to fellowship with Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit. Since this context emphasizes the incompatibility of participating in meals in pagan temples and participating in the Lord's Supper, Paul probably means that those who eat the Lord's Supper align themselves with Jesus, share his sufferings and benefit from his death.

10:17 After Jesus gave thanks for and broke the bread, he said, "This is my body which is for you." The church is also Christ's body. The Lord's Supper, therefore, is an occasion when members of the church declare their unity with each other because of their common unity with Christ.

SOURCES CONSULTED

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