

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. 1 Corinthians 10. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to 1 Corinthians 10.

INTRODUCTION

One of the problems we have in preaching through books of the Bible is that they really weren't meant to be broken up 40 different sermons over the course of a year, but rather, were meant to be read in their entirety. Which means that sometimes we are spending weeks on one subject, and we just circle it.

Well, this is the last week in the subsection in chapters 8 through 10 on food sacrificed to idols.

And this will kinda be a recap, but I think there's something really important to point out. So, let me backtrack all the way to 1 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 1, which starting this whole section off, and which we will culminate this morning.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1

[1] Now concerning food offered to idols:

EXPLAIN: CONTEXT

So, let me set this up contextually once again for us, because I don't think we have a category for this.

- I was at a D-Group cookout this week,
- and we were eating grilled chicken and sausage,
- and our leader said to me,
- *“Don't worry...it's from Costco...”*
- *it wasn't sacrificed to idols!*
- *And I was like, “How can you be sure?”*
- No! It didn't even cross my mind!

But it would have if we were in first-century Corinth.

So, remember, in Corinth the people are poly-theistic...they believe not in one god...but in many gods.

- And all over the city are temples to those gods.
- And in the temples are wood or stone carved idols,
- representations of these gods:
- Zeus, Hermes, Aphrodite, Poseidon.
- Many gods.

And the temples were the place where those gods intersected with our world, and so the Corinthians would go to those temples to make sacrifices, specifically animal sacrifices, to curry favor with the gods.

Now,

- Often, there was meat left over,
- and it would be sold in marketplaces for a discounted rate,
- and that is one thing Paul addresses in these chapters:
- is it ok for Christians to eat that meat?

And we found that Paul answered 'yes' to that question.

- It's just meat!
- So, go for it!

Unless it might be a stumbling block to a friend or neighbor or fellow believer...and then abstain from it. But the meat is cool...go for it.

But there is a whole other thing that he addresses, not the meat, but the temple feasts.

If you remember,

- Paul planted this church in Corinth,
- and about a-year-and-a-half after planting,
- Paul moves on to plant other churches.

And after a while a certain number of Christians in Corinth

- start going back to the temples, thinking,
- *"Hey, now we know the truth.*
- *We know that there is only one God...Jesus Christ...*
- *So, what's wrong with the temple?*
- *Idols are nothing.*
- *The meat is cheap.*
- *Let's do it!"*

TRANSITION

And today Paul is getting down to what is really going on in the temple feasts. So, chapter 10, starting in verse 14...

1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-17

[14] 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.

EXPLAIN: PARTICIPATION

Now, Paul begins this section by talking about the Lord's Supper, but he says that it is a '*participation*' with Christ.

Now, that word *participation*, is the Greek word, *koinōnia*, which means to participate or fellowship or commune. This is why we call the Lord's Supper *communion*.

So, Paul is stressing that taking the cup and partaking in the bread in the Lord's Supper forges a communion or *koinōnia* between us and Christ.

Now, we'll talk about communion in great detail in chapter 11, but suffice it to say, Paul is saying that when we take the Lord's Supper, there is some sort of spiritual transaction taking place.

Now, this can be taken too far,

- as seen in the Roman Catholic doctrine of trans-substantiation.
- But it can also be taken too lightly,
- where the Lord's Supper is ignored, undervalued,
- or made to be a symbol only.

Paul says:

- *"No, you are fellowshiping,*
- *communing with Christ.*
- *You are participating in the body and the blood of Christ."*

TRANSITION

And then Paul begins to compare that *koinōnia* with the whole meat-sacrificed-to-idols thing...verse 18

1 CORINTHIANS 10:18-22

[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?

EXPLAIN: DEMONS

Now, this language is pretty intense.

- Demons.
- The cup of demons.
- The table of demons.
- Participation...*koinōnia*...with demons.

And then he says,

- *“Is the food sacrificed to idols anything?”*
- *No. But, I don’t want you fellowshipping with demons.”*

The food wasn’t the problem...it’s what’s behind the food that was the problem.

- There is nothing wrong with the meat.
- Idols aren’t even real. Right?
 - He says, *“is an idol anything?”*
 - The answer is ‘no’!

There are NOT other gods.

- Paul isn’t a polytheist, worshiping many gods.
- He’s not even a henotheist.
 - Henotheism is a belief in one god
 - and worshiping that one god alone,
 - without denying the existence of other gods.

That’s not the belief of the Hebrews or Christians. Those gods aren’t gods!

So, then what does Paul mean when he says, **I do not want you to be participants with demons?** Well, **Paul's arguments assumes that although idols are only objects made from inanimate material, they still represent a reality that directly competes with God.**

I'll put it like this: while idols aren't real...demons are...

There's one sense in which idols are nothing.

- They're nothing.
- They're wood figurines.
- They're metal trinkets.
- They're nothing.

But in another sense...

- idols are something,
- or what they represent is actually something.
- They're demonic.

While denying the existence of pagan gods, Paul affirms the reality of dangerous spiritual powers that are enemies of God.

POINT 1

And that's Paul's first point, **SLIDE FLEE IDOLATRY**. Now, what does that mean for us?

Well, there is a literal version of this.

- So, those of you who are sacrificing cows at some temple...
- Cut it out!
- Seriously...no more goat sacrifices, ok?

But seriously, there are temples of sorts in our own city.

- There are psychic readings,
- and new age spiritualities,
- and false religions,
- and sects,
- and cults.

I mean, this isn't simply an ancient problem. Are those things real?

- Well, in one sense, no...
- but in another sense,
- there are real, dark, and evil spiritual realities
- that are warring against us.

Are there temples? Are there places in our cities where the physical and the spiritual intersect? I would say yes.

Some of you have been to those places.

- *"Yeah. But that's not real.*
- *I know Jesus and so I'm good."*
- Yeah...you are...
- and those are KINDA not real...
- but KINDA they are.

And Paul says,

- don't go drinking the cup of demons.
- Don't go eating at the table of demons.
- Don't go *koinōnia*...participating with demons.

FLEE IDOLATRY **BLANK SLIDE**

APPLICATION

So, there is a literal application here. But there is also a metaphorical level. And this is where we often find ourselves. You see, **Idolatry is worship of any unworthy object.**

So, **flee idolatry** is also metaphorical,

- anything that captures your heart
- and pulls your heart away from Jesus
- is an idol.

Theologian William Stringfellow said this:

“Idolatry is pervasive in every time and culture, no less now than yesterday...indeed, it might be argued that contemporary Western man is more enslaved to idols than his supposedly less civilized counterpart precisely because he is, presumably, less ignorant about the world in which he lives, and because his favorite idols are the familiar realities of daily life---religion, work, money, status, sex, patriotism.”¹

Anything that can really take your heart away from God and pull you in other directions is an idol!

And there’s a real, evil, spiritual reality behind those things.

- Flee from literal idols,
- but flee from metaphorical idols as well.
- Don’t flirt. Don’t dabble.
- No! You flee!

TRANSITION

So, that's Paul's summation.

- That food sacrificed to idols...it's just food.
- But the realities behind the food...
- get away from them!

But now he turns away from the temple feasts, which he is vehemently against...and back to people.

Paul has a big problem with Christians participating in idolatry... but he differentiates between idolatry...and idolaters.

Verse 23:

1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-24

[23] "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. [24] Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

EXPLAIN: LAWFUL

Now, this verse is almost identical to what Paul said back in chapter 6:12 when talking about sexual immorality.

So, question: are all things lawful for the Christian? NO!

- Idolatry.
- Participation with demons.
- Sexual immorality.
- All the things from previous weeks.
- THESE ARE NOT LAWFUL!

So, Paul is refuting a belief that is common in the church of Corinth,

- where they think
- just because they are saved,
- now they are good
- and covered by Christ,
- and therefore, they can do whatever they want...
- like going to temple feasts.

But Paul's like, *"No. That's not how it works."* And I think there are three things he points out to think through when deciding if something is right or wrong.

HELPFUL?

First: he says, **not all things are helpful**. And so, if you have a weakness, and that thing is not helpful...abstain from it.

So, some of you have a weakness when it comes to alcohol.

- So, that would make drinking alcohol wrong for you.
- Is it wrong for everyone?
- No.
- But for you, it's wrong.

Others, you have a weakness around gambling.

- And so, for you, going to a poker night is wrong.
- Is it always wrong to play poker?
- No.
- But for you it is.
- Because you have a weakness there.

Those ones, for me...not an issue. But we all have areas of weakness.

One of the things that I am extra cautious of is watching TV or movies with explicit sex in it. I just don't want those images in my head.

- So, we just don't watch that stuff.
- Plus, it's super awkward to sin on the couch with my wife
- and have a naked gal on the screen.
- Like, I don't know if I should avert my eyes,
- look around or whatever.

But for me, I just don't want to see those images

- for what they might do in my mind.
- I am weak, and those images are not helpful.

Now, I really like science fiction and fantasy stuff,

- and I heard everyone raving about Game of Thrones,
- and I really wanted to watch it,
- but when I heard about how much sex and nudity
- was in the show,
- I just said, "*Nope. It's not for me.*"
- Cause that could be a weakness for me.

So, some things aren't helpful.

EDIFICAION

Second: Paul says **not all things build up**. The word we often use is edification.

And this concerns other Christians.

- We need to look around at the Christian friends around us,
- and ask, “*am I building them up?*”
- *Am I edifying believers by this or that?*”

And we covered this a few weeks ago, but this is where you never want to cause your brother or sister in Christ to stumble.

This is why we don't drink alcohol at Fathom functions.

- Is it wrong to drink alcohol? No.
- But is it going to edify the church?
- Well, there are enough Christians who struggle
- with this type of addiction,
- that we've just decided
- we're not doing that in our official church functions.

Some things aren't helpful. Some things don't edify.

EVANGELISM

And third, some things aren't **good for my neighbor**. This moves from edification of believers, to evangelism of unbelievers. And Paul goes on to illustrate this in verse 25:

1 CORINTHIANS 10:25-30

[25] Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. [26] For “the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.” [27] If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any

question on the ground of conscience. [28] But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—[29] I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? [30] If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

POINT 2

So, Paul uses a case example of

- going over to an unbeliever's home for dinner,
- which again, shows that Paul DOESN'T say avoid idolaters...
- he says **flee idolatry**.

And so, my second point is that while we FLEE IDOLATRY...

we **SLIDE PURSUE IDOLATERS**.

- This friend,
- who's not a believer,
- thinks enough of you,
- a Christian,
- to have you in his home.

So, if you're over at his house,

- and he lays food before you...
- eat it!
- Remember, meat is meat is meat.

But if the un-believer says,

- *“Wait, oh man, you’re a Christian,*
- *and this was sacrificed to Aphrodite.”*

Essentially saying,

- *“Hey, you’re a Christian,*
- *and this would go against your religion.”*

Then you are NOT to eat it,

- because it could soil your reputation with that unbeliever,
- and it could hinder evangelism.

But his point is: PURSUE IDOLATERS **BLANK SLIDE**

TRANSITION

Now, Paul ends this section by laying down the trump card on the whole thing. Verse 31.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31-11:1

[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. [32] Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, [33] just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

[1] Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

POINT 3

- FLEE IDOLATRY and
- PURSUES IDOLATERS...why?

SLIDE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

God's glory is the ultimate litmus.

- Are you participating with Christ or with demons?

What glorifies God?

- Are you willing to set aside
 - your preferences,
 - freedoms,
 - thoughts,
 - and desires
 - for the good of others?

What glorifies God?

As the Westminster Shorter Catechism says: *What is the chief end of man?*

Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

- The ultimate aim of Christians is to please God,
- not ourselves.
- And in actuality,
- That's what will lead to eternal joy!
- You want a life of enjoyment?
- Glorify God.

BLANK SLIDE

CONCLUSION

So, how to end this sermon...on demons...and this whole section on meat sacrificed to idols?

Well, let me read a verse once again. Look back to verse 22:

1 CORINTHIANS 10:22

[22] Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

EXPLAIN: JEALOUS

Why is idolatry such a big deal to God? Because we worship a jealous God.

You have to pick a side.

- Either worship God, or worship Aphrodite.
- Either worship God, or worship a demon.
- Either worship God, or worship your power, success, and money.
- Either worship God, or worship yourself.

But you cannot drink from both cups. You cannot eat at both tables. You cannot *koinōnia* with both.

ILLUSTRATION

Before I met my wife I loved other women, and she loved other guys before she met me. But at our wedding we made vows, declaring that for the rest of our lives we would “forsake all others.”

- Now, imagine what would happen
- if I kept a box of mementos
- of all the women I loved before I met my wife.
- Then whenever I felt sad
- or wanted to celebrate
- or deal with my struggles,
- I pulled them out and dredged up
- memories of my previous relationships.

My marriage would not go well.ⁱⁱ

Why? **Because all lovers are jealous.**

There is a healthy kind of jealousy that is birthed in love.

- I am jealous for my wife. Because I love my wife.
- I am jealous for my daughter. Because I love my daughter.

And if anyone or anything tries to turn them from my love for them...or to harm them...

- I would fight...
- I would die.

ENDING

You have to pick. But God is a jealous God.

He is jealous for you!

- Because he loves you.
- Because he created you.
- Because he called you.
- And because he saved you.

And he demonstrated his love in this:

- that while we were still sinners,
- he entered time and space,
- took on human form,
- lived, died, and was resurrected...
- all to win you back from your idols...from you sin.

He is a jealous God, and will not share you with anyone or anything that would pull you away from him.

- Run away...
- flee from idols.
- Run away.
- And run to the one true God.

Let's pray together.

LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

ⁱ Quoted in *Beautiful Resistance* by Jon Tyson.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.