

Participation in Christ or Participation with demons

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 February 2024

Preacher: Ife Ojetayo

[0:00] The words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

! Please be seated. Last week, if you remember, we had a look.

At Apostle Paul's invitation, his invitation to look into our family history. I don't know if you know this, but as God's covenant people, the Bible is our family story.

It's our family history book. The story of the Israelites in the Old Testament is, as Paul said for us, it is for us to read and to learn from.

And you know, as the famous adage goes, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. So last week, we looked at the parallels between Israel, Old Testament Israel, and Christians in the New Testament.

[1:21] Which we are Christians in the New Testament, right? Just so you know, we are on the side along with the Corinthians. And so Paul invites us to look at the history book.

The Old Testament Jews, they were God's people. And they were God's people through the mediation of Moses. And they were God's people in their going through the waters of judgment in the Red Sea.

Similarly, Christians belong to God. We belong to God through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the greater Moses. And we are initiated as God's covenant people through baptism in God's triune name.

And as we are buried with Christ and raised into new life in Him. So Paul also tells us, again, referring to the looking back.

He reminds us that the Jews of the Old Testament also ate the same spiritual food. What was that food? Manna from heaven. And they drank the same spiritual drink.

[2:41] It was the water from the rock. And both of these food were miraculously provided for them by God. To sustain them in their wilderness pilgrimage.

Until they reached the promised land. And in the same way, Christ has given to us His broken body. And His shed blood. He gives it to us at the Lord's Supper. So that we might feed on Him in our hearts. By faith. With thanksgiving.

That we might be sustained by this miraculous provision. In our pilgrim journey. As the Israelites were sustained in their wilderness travail.

And so you see the parallels. That Paul is trying to make us to see. He's showing us that baptism and the Lord's Supper. Are the two sacraments of the church.

[3:46] That is given by God. One marks, baptism. Marks the beginning of our life with God. It is by that that we're initiated into God's covenant community.

And the other, the Lord's Supper, marks our continuance. Our ongoing journey. Independence on God. To sustain us.

To feed us. These two signs of sacraments. Correspond to the deliverance at the Red Sea. And the spiritual food and drink of the Old Testament church.

But, here's the thing. It will be presumptuous. To rely on these signs. In and of themselves.

When in fact our hearts. Are far removed from the one who gave the signs. As tokens of His covenant with us. That's what's been going on with Israel.

[4:47] They're relying on the signs that God gives them. The tokens of His love and His covenant with them. But their heart was far removed. From God. And so Paul says, God is not pleased.

He was not pleased with their mere external worship. God is never pleased. With mere external worship. In the case of the Israelites. All but two of them.

Made it to the promised land. The rest perished in the wilderness. Because of their unbelief. And so how do we know.

That they are indeed unbelievers. Well because Paul said in the earlier chapters of chapter 10. He says, they were idolaters. And that's a remarkable thing to say.

About people who were worshipping Yahweh. It's a remarkable thing to say. About people who had the law. Well why would Paul say that?

[5:48] It's because idol worship. True idol. True idolatry. Is not only when you erect. A golden calf. To worship.

Idolatry is far more insidious. Than that. Tim Keller in his book. Can't defeat God. He explains what idolatry is. By saying this.

He answers the question. What is an idol? He said. An idol is anything. That is more important. To you. Than God is. Anything that absorbs.

Your heart. And your imagination. More than God. But. Anything that you seek. To give you. What only God can give you.

That then. Is an idol. And as another eminent pastor. Once said. The human heart. Is an idol making factory.

[6:47] And so. The reality is that. Even in religious communities. Like the Israelites. Were. In the Old Testament. Or like the religious community. That we are in.

Now. The church. Even religious communities. It is quite easy. To engage in idolatry. If. Or when. We honor God. With our lips. But our heart is far from him. When we worship him in vain. Teaching as doctrines.

Human. Human commands. Then we are just. We are in idolatry. We are idolaters.

When that happens. And that's what the Israelites. Were doing. In their. In their community. They took. They took. God's gracious love. Towards them. They took it for granted.

[7:43] They were unfaithful. They were worshiping. Idols. Instead of the true God. They were engaging. As Paul reminded us. Last week. They were engaging. In sexual immorality. And when they are not doing that.

Outrightly. Their unbelieving hearts. Led them to test God. Put God to the test. Or to grumble against God. And so we are reminded.

Not to be like them. To learn from their mistake. To learn from their failure. Unless we think. That we are smarter.

That we are wiser. We are older. More spiritual than they were. We are warned. Not to be overconfident. Let anyone who thinks he stands.

Take heed. Lest he fall. And it's quite easy. It's quite easy. To be self-deluded about ourselves. Or to be deluded by the temptation.

[8:43] Presented by the idols of our age. But Paul reminds us. No temptation is overtaking you. That is not common to man.

So we must. Really what it means by saying that. Is that we must not think. We are beyond falling into temptation. When we start to think about that.

When we start to be prideful. Remember what. God says. In Proverbs. Pride goes before. Destruction.

And so we must be careful. That we don't fall into idolatry. That we don't fall into immorality. Into testing God. Or grumbling against him.

Because the reality is that. We share. The same common. Falling. Human nature. That the Israelites had.

[9:41] Had. We are just as prone. As they were. To falling for. Idols. The idols of our day. But Paul handed.

Last week. With this encouragement to us. Right. So. Be careful. Remember that you are. Made of the same. Flesh. And sinful nature. As they were. And you are prone to fall.

And failure. But also. Here is the encouragement. God is faithful. He will not let us. Be tempted. Beyond our ability.

Paul reminds us. He will provide. A way of escape. Paul reminds us. So if we trust in him. He is faithful.

He will give us. The power to stand. In the face of temptation. Our confidence. Must be in him. And as we see him.

[10:41] As our only security. And help. Our faith. Will then be strengthened. To withstand. Any temptation. That may come our way. But that doesn't mean.

As Paul says that. That doesn't mean. That there is nothing. For us to do. Look there in verse 14. Of 1 Corinthians.

He says. Therefore. Knowing that God is faithful. Knowing that he will provide. A way of escape. Therefore. Beloved. Flee.

From idolatry. You must take. Take that way of escape. That God has provided. And flee.

That's what Paul is trying to remind us here. This is the second time. That Paul will use. The word flee. In this letter. To the 1 Corinthians. Early in chapter 6. He says to them.

[11:39] Flee from sexual immorality. Now he's saying. Flee from idolatry. And to flee. Is really. To take flight. In the opposite direction.

Or to shun something. That is harmful to you. To shun it. After all. You wouldn't saunter up. To an animal. That can kill you. Like a tiger.

And you know. See. Let me see. How close I can get. I can poke it. I put my head in its jaws. Or wrap my hand around its. Its cute. Fluffy.

Fur. You wouldn't do that. You wouldn't put poisons. In any place. Where you can easily misandle it. And drink it. Or someone you love. Can come by. And take it. You wouldn't do that. That's what idolatry is.

[12:40] It can kill. In fact. It will kill. So be careful. Flee from it. And in the case of the Corinthians. They were not heeding Paul's warning.

They were not fleeing. From idolatry. They were not fleeing. From sexual immorality. Instead. What were they doing? They were cozying up. To it. They were flirting.

With destruction. And maybe sometimes. We do that too. And some of them. In the Corinthian church. They were armed.

With the knowledge. That an idol is nothing. Remember in chapter 8. An idol is nothing. So they were armed. With that knowledge. So they wrongly concluded. That it was okay.

Then to go. And participate. In the events. Taking place. In pagan temples. And it was this wrong conclusion. That Paul now wants to confront.

[13:40] In the latter half. Of this chapter. And what's the danger. They're flirting with. Look at the end of our passage. That we read here. Verse 22.

What are they doing? By flirting with idolatry. They are provoking the Lord. To jealousy. Flirtation with the world.

And the things of the world. Loving anything more than God. And placing anything. Above God. In your heart. Is in fact.

Idolatry. And it provokes. God's jealousy. That's what Paul wants us to see that. And why is God so jealous? Does he even have a right to be jealous?

Is he like a jealous spouse? And also. Wait a second. Isn't jealousy a bad thing? Well let's answer that last question first.

[14:37] Is jealousy a bad thing? Not always. Who among you. In a committed relationship. Will countenance. Allow your spouse.

Your significant other. To flirt with another person. To laugh with them. Going on romantic dates with them. Receiving valentine gifts from them.

Who among you will allow that? It's alright. It's nothing. Well if you would do that. If you're not jealous. Then the reasonable conclusion that.

Anyone will make. Is that you're not actually in love. With that significant other. It's not a loving relationship. If you don't care.

Because love. True love. Nurtures. True love guards. True love protects. The love. With the beloved.

[15:38] God. And so. God. Who loves us. Is rightly jealous. For us. God. And so.

Paul says. In verse 15. Be careful. Be careful. Free from idolatry. Don't provoke God's jealousy. I speak to you.

As sensible people. Paul says. Judge for yourselves. What I say. Do you note. A hint. Of sarcasm there. As Paul says. I speak to you.

As sensible people. Maybe I'm reading into it. Because. It doesn't seem like. The Corinthians. Have been sensible so far. As we go through this letter. Does it? But I think.

Paul is more gracious. Than I am allowing. And he's more correct. In calling them sensible people. Why does he do that? Because these. Corinthians believers. They're not invited.

[16 : 34] They're not invited. To just blindly. Follow Paul. Or whatever Paul says. But Paul invites them. To judge rightly. What he's saying. And he knows. They can do that.

Why can't they do that? Why are they able. To do that? Because. He has said. Early in this letter. They have the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit. And Paul knows.

That if they would. Only submit. To God's power. Submit to God's word. In the power of the Holy Spirit. They will be able.

To see rightly. They will be able. To judge rightly. And that's why. That's what he invites them. To do. By the way. Brothers and sisters. The same applies. To us.

As Christians. We have the mind of Christ. And if we. Will just submit. To God's word. In the power of the Holy Spirit. We can understand God's word.

[17 : 30] And we can use it. To judge rightly. So. So let us. Along with the Corinthians. Let us reason rightly. As Paul continues. In his argument. He says to them.

Consider your participation. At the Lord's table. The Greek word. For participation. Is *kononia*.

Some of us are familiar. With that Greek word. It means fellowship.

But it's a little more. Than just fellowship. In the way that we think. Of fellowship. At a social club.

That's not what it is. It's not. The kind of fellowship. You will have later on today. As you gather. At your Super Bowl party.

That's not what's going on here. This fellowship. That Paul speaks of. This participation. At the Lord's table. Is something that is not. Of this world.

Nothing else on earth. compares. To this communal participation. At the Lord's table. And perhaps. Because we are privileged. To enjoy it weekly.

[18 : 27] We have forgotten. Its significance. It's become too familiar. To us. The Corinthians. The Corinthians. As we see. Certainly. They've lost sight. Of its significance.

We'll see that. Even more clearly. As we go to chapter 11. But what is it. That we do. When we gather. To participate. At the Lord's table. We are participating.

In communion. With God. The God of the universe. When we come. To the table. It is nothing less. Than participating.

In the divine reality. Of being God's people. The vertical dimension. Of our union. As we come. In our communion. Informs.

Our horizontal. The horizontal dimension. Because it is. A participation. That we do together. It's not just me. And God. When I come. To participate.

[19 : 24] It is. We gather. As one body. The church. We gather. As one body. To partake. As Paul says. In the one bread. The body of our Lord.

Broken for us. And to part. To take the drink. From the one cup. Which is his blood. So you take the bread. And eat. Knowing that it is.

His body. Given for you. And you receive the cup. And drink. Knowing it is his blood. That is shed for you. This act.

Represents. A covenant pledge. I want to repeat that again. This act represents. A covenant pledge. It's a pledge. Of devotion. And a pledge of solidarity.

With God. And it's not one way. It's in fact. It's first. It's from God. To us. Primarily. Right? God is pledging himself. To us.

[20 : 21] He pledges himself. To you. And then you. Pledge yourself. To him. Every time you come. To the table. To participate. At the Lord's table. And what is being communicated.

At that communion. Is a concrete pledge. Of God's. Redemptive love. Is loving disposition. Towards you. And it is communicated to you.

Through Christ. One oblation. Oblation means sacrifice. Through Christ. One sacrifice of himself. That is once offered. Being a full.

Perfect. And sufficient sacrifice. A sacrifice. A sacrifice. That satisfies. The demands. Of justice. For your guilt. For your sin.

Past. Present. And future. That's what's going on. As you come. Jesus Christ says. That one. These.

[21 : 21] In fact. It's not just again. It's not individual. Right? It's us. These people. These covenant people. As they come. To commune with me. At the table. They belong to me. These ones.

Are forgiven. Redeemed. Sanctified. They've been justified. Through my one sacrifice. Upon the cross.

This. Is not an. An ordinary meal. Okay. We see that. Right? But. But what does this have to do. With idolatry. As Paul is.

Because Paul is really. Talking about idolatry. In this. In this chapter. What does this have to do. With idolatry? What does this have to do. With going to eat meat. At the temple. In the case of the Corinthians. And the Corinthians.

Are probably thinking this. As Paul writes. What does this have to do. With eating at the temple?

They will probably say. Respond to Paul. We understand. That communion. That is what we do.

[22:17] When we gather. At the Lord's table. We do understand. That it's a sacred meal. That we are. That we eat. In the presence of God. Come on Paul. We know that. But that is different.

From eating at a temple. Of Aphrodite. Or Zeus. Come on Paul. I thought we've already agreed.

That an idol is nothing. We know that Zeus.

Or an Aphrodite. Are just statues. Empty statues. Made of Corinthian limestone. Sculpted by a skilled artist. That's all there is.

There is no danger. In eating at the temple. When there is no God. To commune with. That's what they're probably. Saying. And thinking.

But Paul anticipated this. Paul is a good lawyer. He anticipated it. So he repeated his earlier claim. He agrees with them. That an idol is nothing.

[23:13] An idol is indeed nothing. But he wants them to see. That a meal. Here's the thing. A meal. In a religious environment. In a religious context.

Is not just an ordinary meal. It isn't. When we gather here. At the Lord's table. It's not just an ordinary meal. You'll have meals. And fellowship. When you get home. That's quite different. Distinct from what we do. When we gather here. Of course. We know it's really. It's not like any other meal. Because it's not. I mean. I mean. If you get. You come here. And you leave. And you say. Oh I'm full.

Right. It's not. Because. It's not ordinary. Because. The significance of it. Is spiritual. It is otherworldly. It is a real meal.

But it's not. Earthly. And it is true. But. That's. That's true. For every sort of. In every religious context. When we gather. It's also true.

[24:11] That it is. It has. Spiritual connotations. That's what Paul wants them to see. He anticipates it. Well. Yeah. Indeed. Aphrodite is nothing. Zeus is nothing. He says to them.

I imply that what pagans sacrifice though. To these. Empty idols. What they do sacrifice. They offer to demons. And not to God. And I do not want you to be participant.

With demons. That's the. That's the spiritual connotation. Of what's going on. While the idols. Are not real. What is real. Is.

Demons. They are the ones. Behind these idols. So. What you are doing. In going to these temples. Is engaging. In worship.

Of demons. So. It is not nothing. You see. You. Will belong to God. You.

[25:08] Will called by his name. Redeemed by his blood. Welcome into his family. How can you now go. And associate with demons? Do you think that the Lord.

Was bought you with his precious blood. Will not be jealous for you. When you do such a thing. How can you be in unity with God. And his body.

The church. and also then join yourself to demons. This is what's at stake. Corinthians, Paul wants them to know and he wants us to see that as well.

This is what's at stake. When you go to the pagan temple for your functions, this is what's at stake. It's not meaningless. It is idolatry. You must flee from it before it destroys you.

I think at this point, it's easy for us to think. Yeah, we understand what Paul is saying to the Corinthians, but we don't have a temple like a temple to Zeus in our day.

[26:09] We don't have pagan temples. We live in a Christian country, such as it is. First, the truth is there that we, in fact, we live in a pluralistic society.

We live, even in our context, with neighbors who have different religions and different practices.

And some of us come from families and cultures that have, as our heritage, our background, pagan worship, worship to other gods.

And our families still practice such religions. And Paul wants us to see all of it. Although it's to idols, what's behind the idol is the devil, demons.

And so, it's quite challenging then, if you think about that, the command that Paul gives to flee, to leave, to abstain from doing so.

For example, think for a second of a Christian man who is now faced with doing the duty of a son, that a son should perform at the burial of his father at a Hindu temple.

[27 : 32] Think of the pressure on that Christian man. Does he love his father? Does he not care for his father who raised him? But to abstain from that is to obey God's command.

But it's not without cost. And so, it's not quite accurate to think that what Paul is saying here doesn't apply to us.

It only applies to the first century current. But even for us, we don't come from backgrounds that have different religions, Hinduism, Muslim, or whatever it is.

If you don't come from that background, the truth is still that we live in a pseudo-Christian world. We must first remember that an idol, as again, what we define an idol is, an idol is when something or someone becomes more important than God in our devotion.

And so we, we are also faced with idols all around us. And whatever we are devoted to, whatever we value above God, is an idol.

[28 : 43] So that requires us to see that we are not exempt from this warning that Paul gives. I actually want to, I want to press the point home a bit more for us.

And here's the pain point, I think, for us. Are you ready? A 21st century Western society might be more idolatrous than any other society in human existence, if we're honest with ourselves.

We must admit that current has nothing on us in idol worship. Yeah, we don't have temples to Aphrodite and Zeus all around anymore.

But through the advancement in technology, idols are now easily accessible to us at our fingertips. And we must realize this as God's covenant people.

We must flee from them. This is why Paul's warning and encouragement in verse 13 is so important and so applicable. We are not exempt from the temptation that is coming to man.

[29 : 57] That is coming to man, rather. And if anything, we are in fact more vulnerable to those temptations than any time in human history. Pornography is easy to access at the push of a button.

You need not go to the temple of Aphrodite to engage in sexual immorality like the Corinthians had to do in their day. And what of other addictions that we face that are easily available to us?

What about the demonic hold that drugs can have over people? Or the media? That's an addiction as well. Whether it's the on-demand television that is easily accessible to us or video games.

I've noticed this week of a new invention. I think it's Apple that invented it, this goggle thing. And I've seen some videos on YouTube of people just walking around in the street with those goggles on and raptured.

And it sounds like, oh yeah, it's an advanced technology, but it's kind of a dystopian world. Imagine someone just walking around nor interacting with reality anymore.

[31 : 06] Absconced. Addicted. Enslaved. All of those idols are at our fingertips today. And then there are also the age-old idols that's always been around.

Power. Money. Fame. Influence. Chasing clouds. Likes. And follows on social media. Those are idols when we entrust our being to them.

When those things become more important than God. And so, Paul wants us to, he's saying to us as he's saying to the Corinthians, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.

You cannot partake at the table of the Lord and at the table of demons. You cannot. While there are many idols on offer in our world, there are idols in every pagan culture as well.

And what's most significant is that in every pagan culture, there are certain idols that everyone is compelled to worship. So, for example, in the Corinthian world, which is the Roman world, you are free to worship any God you want.

[32 : 17] You're free to choose and take whatever you want. But there's one thing you must, you're compelled to bow down to. You're compelled to bow down to Caesar and the Roman cultures.

You are free to take and leave any other gods, but you must acknowledge that Caesar is Lord. And if you, as long as you acknowledge that, you're let alone.

And you know, this flies in the face of the confession that every Christian must make, that Jesus alone is Lord. And this is why Christians became enemies of the Roman world, of their state, and

