

Idolatry and the Blinding Nature of Sin

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[0:00] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from my adultery. I speak as sensible people.

Judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless is not a participation in the blood of Christ. 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? Because there is one bread. We, who are many, are one body.

[2:37] For we all partake in the one bread. Consider the people of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifice participants in the altar? What do I imply, then?

That food offered to idols is anything? Or that an idol is anything? No. No. I imply that when pagans sacrifice, they offer to demons and not to God.

And I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of the demons.

Shall we provide the Lord jealousy? Are we stronger than he? This is the word of the Lord.

Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, truly for this word.

And God, as you've been priming our hearts all service to receive this, Lord, let us receive it as what it is, the word of God. Lord, not the words of men, not the words of the sinful preacher that's standing up front.

[3:50] This is the word of God. And so, Lord, I pray that you, Lord, would teach us and instruct us for your glory and for our good. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Well, good morning, Shoreline. Again, for those that are new, we're so glad that you're here. My name is Mike, one of the pastors here at Shoreline, and I just want to welcome you to this space.

We are, as you've seen from throughout the service and even in my prayer, we're a church that's not perfect. No church is, and we will not ever claim to not be such.

But we have a God that loves us. We have a God who died to free us from sin and who is with us. And so that's our hope. Our hope is Jesus. And we hope that as we continue here in this service that you would encounter Jesus through this body and through this word.

Well, I still remember one particular night in junior high youth group. We had broken out into small groups, and my leader, Dean, had gotten off on his soapbox again about burning CDs.

[5:00] If you can remember those days, if you can remember those days, telling us how we were stealing, pirating music. In other words, in sin. Now, my fellow eighth graders and I, we had convinced ourselves that it was perfectly fine.

And, you know, as he talked, we failed to hold back some of our mocking laughter and thinking in our heads, Oh, Dean, just get with the times, man. Like, get over it already. And, you know, years later, I came to the realization that it was objectively wrong.

It was stealing. It was objectively wrong. But I had been driven in my eighth grade self by my inner sinful desires. You see, we're all really good at convincing ourselves that we're clean.

We're all really good at pointing out sin in others while denying its presence in our own hearts and lives. Now, this is nothing new, right?

This is nothing new. It's as old as the fall, and we see it right here in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. So, please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 10 if you haven't already done so. There are Bibles in the

back table bookmarked to the passage.

[6:09] If you need a Bible, feel free to keep one of those as a gift to you. We are walking this year through 1 Corinthians. It's the church's call to display Christ in all things.

And that's what we want to be doing is displaying Christ in all things. Today, we're in the third of four passages in which Paul is addressing the issue of food offered to idols.

Food offered to idols. Now, this section on food offered to idols, it runs from chapter 8, verse 1, all the way to 11, verse 1. So, we started this the week before Easter in chapter 8.

And as we discussed in that week, animals would regularly be offered up in sacrifice to the gods in various temples, whether the god of Apollo or of Asclepius or other gods.

Now, leftover meat was then sold in the marketplace from those sacrifices. But first, it would be consumed by the priests. It would also be served at various meals that were actually hosted in the temple grounds.

[7:14] So, there in the temple grounds of the gods, people would host social gatherings like dinner parties and birthday parties and funerals. So, the Corinthian believers had to decide, do we accept the invitation to these events in the pagan temples?

Or, do we decline these invitations and then risk being ostracized socially? Okay, so there's a lot going on here. There's a lot at stake. Now, they were wrestling with, just like we do today, maybe not in food offered to idols, but they were wrestling with, how do we engage with our secular culture?

How do we engage with its social customs and social habits? Now, as we saw in chapter 8, there were the knowers of Corinth who asserted with this tight theological argument that it was just fine to burn the CDs, I mean, to eat the food offered to idols.

But there was this other group, the weaker believers that Paul calls them, whose consciences would not allow them to do that. Now, this was no doubt leading, once again, to division in the body of Corinth.

Now, if you remember, Paul's addressing of this topic, it began with the overarching principle of love. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

[8:39] We saw that knowledge must be accompanied by Christ-like love that's willing to lay down one's rights for the good of others. And then in chapter 9, as Rob preached for us last week, Paul puts his own life forward as an example of what it looks like to do this, right?

To lay down one's rights. Remember, Paul defended his rights as an apostle, only to then defer those rights for the spread of the gospel, for the salvation of the lost.

So now in chapter 10, same topic, food offered to idols. Paul makes a dramatic shift in his argument, and he's building towards a big reveal at the end of today's text that he had chosen for two and a half chapters to conceal.

Now, in this, we learn about idolatry and the blinding nature of sin, and that's the title of today's sermon. And we're going to see that Paul, with pastoral wisdom intact, he moves from parallels to principles to prescription.

And so here we have the parallels, the parallels to God's people in the past. This is in verses 1 through 5. Now, Paul begins, For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers.

[9:58] The four, as we know, it connects back to what Paul was just saying in chapter 9 at the end. Paul was talking about the need for Christians to press forward and self-discipline, right?

Toward the eternal prize and the possibility of disqualification. Now, this is a tension that is present all throughout the New Testament.

You see, on the one hand, our salvation, it's a good spot for an amen here, our salvation is assured in Christ. Thank you. A little early, but I like the clapping earlier today. That's all right.

Hey, if you want to clap, you clap. If you're off beat, it's okay. Just worship the Lord. Okay, so on the one hand, our salvation is assured in Christ, who promises, as Paul said in chapter 1, verse 8, to sustain us to the end, guiltless in the day of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our salvation is assured in Christ. Now, on the other hand, the New Testament shows us over and again, we are called to diligently confirm our calling and election. To strive, to hold on, to press

forward.

[11:09] And saints, we have to see these two realities not as competing, but as complementary. For as we see ourselves carrying out all the imperatives of the gospel, working hard, striving, we're assured all the more that Christ is risen, his spirit lives inside us and is at work in our hearts, and he will surely finish the good work that he started in us.

We work with his strength, with his energy. That's why Paul says in Philippians 2, 13, for it is God who works in us both to will, to desire, and to work for his good pleasure.

It all gets back to the glory of God. But these realities, they're not competing, they're complementary. Now, in light of all this, Paul says, In these verses here, Paul is drawing clear parallels between the Corinthians and the ancient Israelites in the wilderness.

Now, first, we shouldn't miss a really beautiful implicit truth here. The Corinthian church consisted of Jews and Gentiles, right? Those that were not of Jewish descent.

But Paul refers to the ancient Israelites as all of their fathers. All believers in Jesus Christ belong to the true Israel of God.

[12:41] We have been grafted in, Paul says in Romans 11. We have been given an everlasting name in God's family that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 56, 5. We, church, all of us, if you're in Christ, we are the sons and the daughters of Abraham and of God. So to read the Old Testament is to read our spiritual family history.

Okay, now notice the parallels that Paul draws. Paul says the Israelites were all under the cloud. That is, they enjoyed the divine presence and protection of God.

If you remember, when he led them by cloud by day and then by fire at night. And the Corinthians, too, enjoy the divine protection and presence of God in Christ.

They all passed through the sea, Paul says. That is, they experienced the deliverance of the Lord when they were led through dry ground, through the Red Sea. Corinthians, too, have been redeemed from slavery, not to Egypt, but to sin.

[13:45] Right? They've been redeemed. They've been delivered. Paul says the Israelites were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Now, this sounds a bit weird to us. What Paul is simply saying is that the Israelites, in being led out of Egypt, and being delivered through the Red Sea, they were established as a holy people for service to God under Moses' leadership.

This is similar to Christians, right? We have been freed from bondage to sin. We've been established as a holy people for service to God under the leadership of Christ.

We've been baptized into Christ, and that is represented beautifully in the waters of baptism. Paul says all the Israelites, they all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink.

Now, Paul is alluding to the physical manna, the physical water that God provided for Israel, and at the same time, he is drawing to the spiritual reality that it represented, the soul nourishment that belonged to ancient Israel in God.

But he goes even further when he says this, for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. He's talking about Israel.

[15:05] Did you catch that? Paul says they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Now, Deuteronomy chapter 32.

You should read this in your spare time this week. It is a song that Moses wrote and delivered to the Israelites very near the end of his life. And in this song, for the very first time in Scripture, Moses proclaims God as the rock.

He's the rock whose work is perfect, whose ways are just. The rock who is faithful and strong and unlike any other. He's the rock of Israel's salvation.

The rock who bore and gave birth to the nation of Israel. Beautiful song about God, Yahweh, Israel's covenant-keeping God as the rock.

And now, 1,500 years later, Paul is attributing to Jesus Christ what Paul attributed to Yahweh. Jesus Christ was there with Israel in the wilderness.

[16:06] Jesus Christ was there offering his divine presence and protection, nourishing them spiritually with himself. And he continues to

do that today for us through the Holy Spirit.

Amen? The rock was Christ. Now, having established these parallels between the Corinthians and the Israelites, Paul drops this bomb in verse 5.

Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. The word overthrown, it's really more like strewn or scattered.

And a few other translations capture this better when they say their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. You remember, the Israelites, due to their sin and rebellion, which Paul's going to go on to describe, they were sentenced to a 40-year death march through the wilderness.

Right? That generation was barred from entry into the promised land. Now, what's Paul's point, though? His point is that all of them, did you notice the five times repeated all, all of them, all of them, all of them, all of them experienced the blessings of participation in the covenant community of God.

[17:22] And yet, despite these great advantages, most of them displeased the Lord, resulting in judgment. Now, friends, before we move on, we must let Paul's words sink in for a minute.

In the wilderness, the Israelites witnessed, not just in the wilderness before that, the Israelites witnessed God's power to free them from Egypt. To establish them as a nation, they experienced the divine presence and protection of God.

They experienced his nourishment, physically and spiritually. And even still, many of them rebelled against the Lord and incurred his judgment. It is possible to go to church all your life, to participate in the community of faith, to even experience the blessings of fellowship with God in connection with other believers, and yet be leading a life that displeases the Lord.

Saints, we all know this to be true in a practical sense, right? In which we can go through seasons of sin, whether a second or for months at a time, outwardly playing the part, right?

But inwardly rebelling against the Lord. The Lord sees that. But friends, this is also true, not just in a practical sense among the saints. This is true in an ultimate sense.

[18:44] We can be, this is the warning here, we can be among the saints and yet not actually one of them. And Paul is urging us, beware of a complacent spirit.

Beware of an attitude that says, I'm good simply because I'm here. That's not the case. Now that's getting a little bit ahead because, because Paul actually makes clear what principles he wants the Corinthians to draw from this parallel.

So that's the second part here, the principles for God's people in the present. Paul says in verse 6, look at your Bibles. Now these things took place as examples for us. Paul wants the Corinthians to consider the lessons learned from Israel's failings.

Now he's about to list four ways in which Israel fell into sin and incurred God's pleasure. You might call each of these ways a pinnacle event, okay?

An unplanned adverse event for you Navy and EB and Coast Guard folks. And as with any pinnacle or significant event, you've got to what?

[19:51] You've got to hold the critique, right? You've got to determine the root cause. You've got to document your lessons learned. And then you develop your short and your long-term corrective actions. Okay, now Paul has read the critique out brief.

Okay, he knows all about it. In other words, the Torah, Genesis through Deuteronomy. He's read it. He's an expert. He's taken it to heart. And he wants the Corinthians to take to heart these lessons as well.

And so the first thing that Paul does is he identifies the root cause. This is the root cause of Israel's sins. Paul says that these things took place as examples for us.

Why? That we might not desire evil as they did. Now, Paul is likely alluding to Numbers 11, in which Israel complained about the manna that God was miraculously providing for them.

And they had, it says in the text there, they had a strong craving, a strong desire for meat. Meat, huh? Now that sounds familiar. God did end up providing meat, but he also sent a plague.

[20:56] Right? He struck many down for their sin. Now it's this desire, this inward sinful craving that lay at the root of all the other sins of Israel. And Paul then goes on to list those.

Now this desire, it doesn't just lay at the root of Israel's sins. Right? This is the root of the sins of humanity. James chapter 1, verses 14 and 15 says, But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by what?

By his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. The heart, the heart is the seat of our desires.

And that's where sin originates. And that means, church, listen to this. That means that any attempt to eradicate sin that doesn't address the heart is incomplete.

And this is why we need the gospel. Right? This is why we need Jesus. Because through his death on the cross, he has defeated the power of sin. And he has given us new hearts with new desires.

[22:09] Desires that want to glorify God. But we know, saints, that our old sin nature, it is still resident in our hearts. So continually, we need to do the heart-searching work that's required to get at the root of our sin.

Then we bring those root sins to the Lord in repentance. And we bring them in faith that he can and will transform the heart. Transform us at the heart level.

Now, this biblical understanding of sin, it must not only be applied individually, but also in all of our discipling relationships. Whether that's with fellow believers, or our kids, or our spouses.

It's the sin in the heart. That's what needs to be corrected. And God does that by grace. All right, so having established the root sin, Paul goes on to list these four ways that Israel desired evil.

And then the consequence of each. Now, we don't have time today to expound on all four of these. But I'm going to list each sin. I'm going to list the Old Testament passage that Paul's alluding to.

[23:18] And so you can write them down. You can look them up this week. And I want to say, it is striking. It is striking. As I studied this week, how much correlation there is between Israel's failures and the Corinthian situation involving food offered to idols.

Now, we're going to see this, especially with the first two. Look, in verse 7, Paul mentions Israel's sin of idolatry. And he's alluding there to perhaps the most egregious instance of idolatry ever, which was the golden calf in Exodus 32.

And then in verse 8, Paul lists the sin of sexual immorality. It's alluding to Numbers 25. Israel is invited by their pagan neighbors to worship Baal and the other Canaanite deities, and they accept. And in both of these passages, in Exodus 32 and Numbers 25, both of them, Israel engages in idolatry, and there's eating and drinking, and there's sexual immorality.

All of it combined into one act. Do you get the picture that Paul's painting here? Do you see the correlation that Paul is making? And in both instances, severe judgment from the Lord is what follows.

[24:28] In verse 9, Paul lists the twin sins. Verse 9 and 10, Paul lists the twin sins of putting Christ to the test and grumbling. He's alluding to Numbers 21 and 14, respectively.

And again, we're not going to go into it, but there's distinct parallels between Israel's failures, which resulted in God's judgment, and then the Corinthians' situation. Okay, but I want to ask, why does Paul go through all the trouble to list all these things out for the Corinthians?

Well, he says so in verse 11. He says, Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

Paul is going through all this trouble because he wants the Corinthians to be instructed. Or more accurately, he wants them to be warned or admonished. See, what happened to ancient Israel, it was written for the church's instruction and warning.

For believers in Christ, Paul says, on whom the end of the ages has come. What does Paul mean? The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

[25:37] That resulted in the great shift, you might say the greatest shift in the history of mankind. See, we're now living because of Christ, and after Christ, we're living in the last days.

Between Christ's first coming, in which he conquered sin in the grave, and his second coming, in which he's going to consummate that victory that he won at the cross in the empty tomb.

And as we live in these last days, Paul is saying, we need to consider our family history, which has been preserved for us in Scripture. And we need to consider it for both instruction and for warning.

Now briefly, this has a few implications for us today. First, there are riches to be gained for us in the treasure chest of God's Word. There are riches in God's Word.

We need to pursue these treasures by reading and studying and meditating and praying through God's Word, all of it. And the things that we see in Scripture, whether here in the New Testament, back in the Old Testament, they are just as applicable for us today as they were back then.

[26:42] Now second, Paul is actually showing us here how to interpret and apply Scripture. That's what he's doing. We interpret Scripture in its original context.

Paul doesn't strip it out of the context. He's talking about these events in their context. They were real events that happened to real people. And so when we study Scripture, we're seeking to uncover what it meant to the original audience.

And then we translate that forward to today, to us, through the gospel of Jesus Christ. And this is just a really simple graphic here. Them then, through the gospel, to us now.

And that's just in really short form. That's how we study Scripture. And Paul's showing us that right here in 1 Corinthians 10. Now the third thing is Paul is reminding the proud Corinthians and us that we are lifelong learners of God's Word.

Remember Paul said in chapter 8, verse 2, No one, no one yet knows as he ought to know.

[27:54] And even as Andrew was exhorting us, even if you have the doctrine down, that doesn't mean it's affected every nook and cranny of your heart and life. All of our lives, all of our lives, we're going to be going deeper into our understanding of God's Word and our application, right?

Our assimilation of it into our hearts and lives. So the Corinthians now, they're finally primed to receive the principles themselves that Paul is trying to bring to light here.

And these principles come in three forms. There's a warning, there's a reminder, and there's a promise. And so we see first the warning. Look at verse 12. Paul is warning these proud knowers of Corinth, remember?

The ones who had erected this tight theological argument for why they could eat food offered to idols. He's warning them. And he's warning them that they view themselves as spiritually knowledgeable and spiritually mature, but they too are vulnerable to sin.

That's the warning. They too are vulnerable to the blinding effects of sin. Take heed, lest you fall. He's urging them to beware of a proud, complacent spirit.

[29:23] Proverbs 16, 18 says, pride goes before destruction. So there's a warning here. But then he follows that up in verse 13 with a reminder.

He says, no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. Now here, I think Paul is subtly suggesting to these knowers of Corinth, the supposed strong of Corinth, that they have in fact succumbed to temptation.

But he's also telling strong and weak alike, he's telling all believers that they shouldn't think that they're the first ones or the only ones to face their current struggle.

Others too have been tempted towards idolatry. Others too have faced cultural pressures to break the first commandment and put other gods before the one true God.

But then Paul immediately follows that with a promise. The promise that gets quoted so much because it's a beautiful promise. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

[30:27] But with the temptation, he will also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it. Now Paul grounds this beautiful promise in the faithfulness of God.

Just as he had done back in chapter 1 when he said that Christ will sustain you to the end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. He said that because God is faithful. Paul was speaking there of God's faithfulness to preserve us until the return of Christ.

And here he's speaking of God's faithfulness to demonstrate that reality by providing spiritual strength in our moment-by-moment temptations of life.

He provides a way of escape. A way to resist that sin. And to choose holiness instead. Now it's important to realize when Paul says your ability, right?

He won't let you be tempted beyond your ability. He's clearly speaking of our ability with the help of the Lord. Look, we have no ability in and of ourselves to resist sin.

[31:30] We need God's help. Now brothers and sisters, before we see how Paul finally applies these principles here to the Corinthian situation, I want to just press these into application for us.

And the first thing that I want to say from this text here is you're not facing a temptation that hasn't been faced before. You're not facing a temptation that hasn't been faced before.

One of the great lies that Satan wants us to believe is that the struggle that we are facing is entirely unique. No one has ever walked through this before.

Ecclesiastes 1.9. Solomon said, There is nothing new under the sun. Now listen, yes, our exact circumstances might be unique.

But the temptations of the heart that we experience are as old as the fall. Don't believe Satan's lies.

[32:33] The temptations that we face are common to man. You're not facing a temptation that hasn't been faced before. And you're not facing a temptation for which God won't provide a way of escape.

You're not facing a temptation, saints, for which God won't provide a way of escape. He will. He will. He promises to do this. And you know, Jesus promises disciples that if they ask anything in his name, they will receive it.

Remember that? Remember all those promises? And then he gave his disciples a model. The Lord's Prayer. To pray things that are clearly in his name. This is how you should pray. And you know, the last petition of that model prayer is, Lead us not into temptation, but what?

But deliver us from evil. Matthew 6.13. Now listen, this isn't some magical, you know, incantation to recite. To coerce God to act.

It's enlisting his strong and gracious support to accomplish what he has died and willed to accomplish. Namely, your victory over sin.

[33:46] He's died so that that would be possible. He wills it. He desires it. So pray that prayer. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Wrestle that prayer into the exact circumstances of your life, into the specific temptations. Father, show me the way of escape from cutting corners at work.

Right? Help me to follow that path. May I not, and then go to the root sins. May I not desire worldly success over pleasing you. God, deliver me from the sin of harshness towards my spouse or my children, and kill the root of pride from which that springs up.

Help me desire their good from a heart of love rather than my control, rather than my respect, whatever it is for you. The temptations that we face, church, they are common to man.

And God faithfully provides a way of escape. So let us be increasingly in the habit of praying for and of looking for and of then following that way out that God gives.

[34:56] For our good and his glory. Now those were a few specific situations we might be facing today. But in the text, Paul finally moves from the parallels to the principles to prescription.

And he applies them directly to the Corinthians. So here's the prescription for the Corinthians problem. Look at verse 14. Therefore, my beloved.

He's always so gentle, isn't he? Therefore, my beloved. Even when he's going to bring a hard word. Flee from idolatry. Paul has been inching closer and closer to this big reveal that I talked about.

The end of his argument here. The Corinthians, they ought to be picking up on where Paul's going. They should be. Okay. Especially with now this imperative.

Flee from idolatry, he's saying. Remember, we're talking about food sacrifice to idols. But many of the Corinthians believe that was perfectly acceptable. Paul says, flee from idolatry. I speak.

[36:01] Verse 15. I speak as to sensible people. Judge for yourselves what I say. Now something Paul's being sarcastic again.

Because he's been sarcastic a decent amount in his letter to Corinthians. I don't think Paul's being sarcastic here. I think he's actually appealing to the Corinthians' God-given ability to know and to discern.

In chapter 1, he prays them for their wisdom and the knowledge that God has given to them. After all, in chapter 2, verse 16, he said, we have the mind of Christ.

He's calling on them right now to use that mind. Use their Christ-given Christ mind. Okay. So if that's the imperative. Flee from idolatry.

And then the appeal. I speak as to sensible people. Paul follows that with the rationale. Look at verse 16. The cup of blessing that we bless.

[36:58] 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? Because there is one bread. We who are many are one body.

For we all partake of the one bread. Okay. In this next step in Paul's argument, he's pointing to communion. Right? He's pointing to the Lord's table. And the spiritual realities that are symbolized there and appropriated there.

The cup of blessing. It's the communion wine that we're going to partake of later. It's not actually wine. Don't worry. The communion wine we're going to partake of later. By partaking of this cup, we're giving thanks.

It's a cup of blessing. We're blessing the Lord. We're giving thanks to the Lord. And we're participating, Paul says, in the blood of Christ. What does that mean? We're sharing in the saving benefits of Christ's blood shed for us on the cross.

And we're pledging our loyalty to Christ in this participation. Now, likewise, by partaking of the bread, the communion bread, we're sharing in the saving benefits of his body broken for us.

[38:07] What are these saving benefits? Forgiveness of sins? Reconciliation to the living God who made us?

Adoption into his family forever? Eternal life? Eternal joy in God's presence? These are the saving benefits of Christ's body broken, his blood shed for us.

And fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. This, too, is both symbolized and then actualized in the Lord's Supper.

As we partake of the bread and the cup, we're making visible our unity in the gospel. And that's across all dividing lines. Some of us might not be friends outside of here, right?

But Christ has brought us together as one and united us across lines with which the world would seek to keep us apart. I mean, this is beautiful. Communion is a beautiful event.

[39:06] Communion is filled with meaning. And Andrew, I'm really excited about this. Andrew's going to be expounding on this in a few weeks when this becomes Paul's main topic.

The Lord's Supper becomes Paul's main topic in chapter 11. And we also have the joy of partaking of the Lord's table in just a few minutes. But why does Paul, back in the text here, why does Paul start talking about communion?

Like, what's his point? Paul is highlighting here that communion is not a spectator sport. You're not passive in communion.

You're participating. Right? It's a sharing, we said. It's a fellowshiping. It's a keeping company with, namely with Christ and his saints.

And this is also true, verse 18, in Israel's ritual sacrifices. Paul says in verse 18, consider the people of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?

[40:05] Right? There's an active participation going on. Now, Paul's suggesting something, though. He's not just laying down facts here. He's suggesting to the Corinthians that they are not passive spectators when they go into the temples of the pagan gods.

They are participants. Right? Just like the Jewish worshipers. Just like Christians partaking of the Lord's table. And then Paul predicts that the Corinthians are going to pick up on the conclusion that he's about to declare and object to it.

Right? And so Paul preempts in verse 19. He knows the Corinthians are on to him. He objects. They're going to object. Paul says, verse 19, What do I imply then?

That food offered to idols is anything? Or that an idol is anything? Okay, Paul can hear the objections. Paul, you agreed with our theological argument.

We thought. For why eating food offered to idols is perfectly acceptable. Right? Paul, you agreed with us in chapter 8 that idols are nothing. So are you contradicting yourself now?

[41:13] Like, are you saying that idols are something? We're participating with these idols? And here comes. Here comes Paul's big

reveal. Okay? Here's what Paul says in answer to this objection.

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.

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. This is what Paul has been building towards this entire chapter.

Right? He showed the Corinthians the parallels between their situation and then ancient Israel. And then he drew out the principles from Israel's story. Right? He was highlighting their vulnerability to sin.

It's blinding effects. He warned them, take heed lest you fall. And then he urged them, flee from idolatry. Because they're joined to Christ and the saints.

[42:12] And now he makes the final connection in his argument. No, no, no, no. Idols are not anything in and of themselves. But to participate with the pagans in the very temples of their gods is to participate with demons.

Church, we are not in a battle against flesh and blood. No, idols aren't anything in and of themselves. We are in a battle, as Paul says to the Ephesians, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

The situation is deeper than meets the eye, writes one commentator. Paul is saying, look, look, you knowers, you knowers, you supposed strong of Corinth.

All this time, you thought yourselves to be super strong and super spiritual. All this time, you believe that you had a watertight argument for why you can eat food offered to idols.

Not realizing that you have been blinded by sin. You have been driven by the evil desires within your hearts. Your pride, your craving for reputation.

[43:26] Your desire to avoid the reproach of men. All of these things have led you to compromise on the gospel. To participate in the evil and demonic systems of this world.

And Paul is saying, this is tantamount to idolatry. It's breaking commandment number one. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. And it's provoking the Lord to jealousy.

Now listen, unlike our jealousy. Because when you hear the word jealousy, you think that's a bad thing. Why is God jealous? Unlike our jealousy, God's jealousy is a righteous jealousy.

Because he owns us. We belong to him. Not only did God create us. He created us.

He made us. The one who makes something is the owner. He made us. By the word of his power. Not only did he create us. He purchased us at the lofty price of his son's life.

[44:30] God is right to be jealous when our hearts turn from worship of him to worshiping all the God replacements that our little idol factory hearts produce.

And friends, here's another thing though. His jealousy over you and me is a sign of his love. You know, the jealousy of a loving spouse is rightly aroused when their spouse commits adultery.

There is a right jealousy that is aroused. God's jealousy reveals his love for us. He wants us. He died for us. He longs to have all of us.

All of our affection. All of our devotion. And this is our good. Scripture connects this with our eternal good over and over again. Now that's another sermon for another time.

What this sermon has been driving towards is to show that we are all vulnerable to sin and its blinding effects, but God always provides a way of escape.

[45:35] We are all vulnerable to sin and its blinding effects, but God always provides a way of escape. And Christians, the fact that we're prone to fall into sin, the fact that sin is, the desire is good, or that you would bring that person to faith in Christ right now, today, this morning, Lord.

Father, that's the work that you're about doing. You are about a transformative work in the heart of every human. Lord, that's what you long for. That's what we desire, Father. And I pray that you would do that work in us this morning.

Father, for those that are in Christ, we know the battle that Paul talks about in Romans 7. We know the spiritual blindness that Paul is showing the Corinthians here in chapter 10. God, would you help us to continue, Lord, fighting the sin that lay inside us.

Lord, help us by the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the flesh and help us to be a loving help to one another in that effort, Lord. God, we want to be more like Christ.

We want to press on toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Help us, Father, to do that and it's your power that works in us. Lord, we're not questioning here whether you're at work, whether your cross, the cross of Christ is sufficient.

[47:12] It is. And so we rest in that. We rest in what your Son has done on the cross, Lord. And as we go now to celebrate communion together, Lord, may you speak to us, speak to our hearts, put your gospel on display.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Thank you.