

1 Corinthians 10-1-22

Introduction:

When you hear the word idol what is the first thing you think of?

Maybe you think of the **Lord Murugan Statue (Selangor, Malaysia)** (show image)

This statue, measuring 137 feet in height, is said to be the world's tallest depiction of a Hindu deity... The statue is made up of 250 tons of steel, 1,550 cubic meters of concrete and 300 liters of gold paint.

Maybe you think of the **Tian Tan Buddha (Hong Kong)** (show image)

This enormous statue -- the world's largest seated outdoor bronze Buddha -- took 12 years to complete. Tian Tan Buddha stands 112 feet high and weighs 250 tons.

Maybe you think of the **Leshan Giant Buddha (Sichuan, China)** (show image)

This 71-meter (232 feet) stone statue was built during the Tang dynasty. Construction of the Buddha, started in 713 AD, though it wasn't finished until 803.

These are all idols... and people worship them.

Did you know that idolatry is one of the most prominent sins in the Bible? Idolatry is the root cause for every sin...

This brings us to this morning's text. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-22 Paul makes one main point...

Here is his point... Flee idolatry.

Why does Paul make this point? In ancient Corinth, the people worshipped many Gods. Worship of these Gods often took place inside a temple and involved eating and drinking. This was a huge part of the social and political life of Corinth. These temples were like modern day restaurants. As a result, most Corinthians thought nothing of going to a temple, participating in three to five minute religious ritual, and then feasting with friends. But, Paul is clear that the Corinthians must not participate in these activities because they are idolatrous.

Easier said than done... refraining from these activities was, practically speaking, very challenging and costly for the Corinthians. It often meant losing business contracts, friends, and clout in the community.

Maybe you are thinking, "I get it, but I have never, nor will I ever worship an idol." Not so fast, an idol is anything we value more than God. In this sense, every person who has ever lived is guilty of idolatry. We have all valued other things more than God. Not only does idolatry arouse God's jealousy, idolatry destroys our lives. So, how are we going to flee idolatry? Before we flee idolatry, we need to see idolatry. So, we will look at two things this morning.

Seeing idolatry

Fleeing idolatry

First, seeing idolatry

We see idolatry in Israel's history...

In verses 1-4 Paul recounts Israel's history...

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 (ESV) — 1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, **2** and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, **3** and all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

Paul goes back 1,400 years and describes the incredible blessings that God lavished on Israel.

Here is what he says-

"our fathers were all under the cloud" A giant pillar shaped cloud guided the Israelites around the dessert during the day and they were guided by a pillar of fire at night.

"and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses," God delivered the Israelites from Egypt by parting the Red sea supernaturally. This is described as their baptism.

"and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ." God provided manna from heaven and water out of the rock. The rock was Christ, meaning that Jesus Christ, who has always existed, ultimately delivered them. The manna and the water nourished and sustained them just like we are nourished and sustained by the lord's supper.

Verses 1-4 foreshadowed new covenant baptism and communion.

Here is the point... the Israelites had incredible spiritual privileges. Can you imagine seeing what they saw and experiencing what they experienced???

They woke up every morning and collected manna from heaven for 40 years.

They saw the pillar of fire and the cloud.

They watched the red sea part.

They saw water flow from the rock...

Nevertheless, all these amazing blessings did not keep them from idolatry. How do we know???? Let's keep studying their history.

Look with me at verses 5-10

1 Corinthians 10:5-10 (ESV) — 5 Nevertheless, (stop here) with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. **7** Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."

v. 7 is a reference to the golden calf incident. While Moses was up on the mountain to receive the law of God the Israelites built an idol out of Gold... (Ex 32:25-29) and the people rose up to play (this had sexual connotations in the Hebrew). This aroused God's anger...

8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.

v. 8 is a reference to Numbers 25:1-3, 9.

Numbers 25:1-4 (ESV) — 1 While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. **2** These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. **3** So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. **4** And the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the LORD, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."

Idolatry is often associated with sexual sin. In this story, the Israelite men hooked up with the Moabite women and embrace their idols. As a result, God struck dead 23,000 people in one single day.

9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

v. 9 is a reference to Numbers 21:4-9. In this story, the Israelites grumble and complain about food and drink. Grumbling and complaining is a form of idolatry.

As a result, God sent fiery serpents into the camp, thousands died, but he also gave them a means of escape. They were saved when a bronze snake was erected and anyone who looked to the snake would be saved (Num. 21:6-9)

Let me summarize.

Here is what we see in Israel's history...

God lavished Israel with spiritual blessings, but these blessings did not insulate them from idolatry.

As a result, their idolatry aroused God's fierce anger. Yes, god gets angry...

They made a golden calf. God disciplined them...

They worshipped the Moabite Gods. God disciplined them.

They committed sexual sin. God disciplined them.

They complained... God disciplined them.

These sins are all a manifestation of idolatry.

Paul chose these examples from Israel's history very carefully. The Corinthians were guilty of all the same forms of idolatry.

The Corinthians were guilty of sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6)

The Corinthians were guilty of worshipping foreign Gods (1 Cor. 8,10)

The Corinthians were guilty of complaining against God (2 Cor. 12:20-21)

Application:

Being immersed in spiritual privilege does not protect us from idolatry nor keep us from God's discipline.

Many of us were raised in wonderful Christian homes. And for this we should be eternally grateful.

Nevertheless...

Being born in a Christian home does not insulate you from idolatry.

Going to a Christian school does not...

Getting baptized...

Walking down an aisle at a crusade...

Signing a pledge card...

Going to crossroads...

Attending a small group...

All of us must be vigilant about even the slightest hint of idolatry in our own lives.

Spiritual privileges do not insulate us from idolatry! We clearly see this in Israel's history. So, what is going to help us flee idolatry? This brings us to the second point.

First, seeing idolatry

Second, fleeing idolatry

How do we flee idolatry? By remembering God's discipline.

1 Corinthians 10:5–6 (ESV) — 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. **6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.**

1 Corinthians 10:11–12 (ESV) — 11 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. **12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.**

Paul says to the Corinthians, "Corinthians, you think you can get away with attending pagan festivals, in pagan temples, eating pagan foods. You can't. Don't be a fool. God disciplined Israel and God will discipline you!!!

Verse 12 is important...

"Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."

In other words, "Corinthians, you think you are strong, you think you can handle temptation, you think you don't have to worry about idolatry, think again!!! None of us are immune from the temptation to idolatry."

I recently heard a respected pastor from an excellent denomination say that he knows of five pastors who have recently fallen. Sobering!!!

We must remember from Israel's history that God disciplines idolatry.

Application:

God, most often, disciplines idolatry by giving idolaters over to their idols and letting the idol strangle the life out of them.

Romans 1:24–27 (ESV) – 24 Therefore **God gave them up** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, **25** because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. **26** For this reason **God gave them up to dishonorable passions**. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; **27** and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

God gave the romans over to their idolatry... this is life killing.

Illustration:

Fox Sports' Joe Buck has revealed that he was addicted to hair plugs, and that his addiction almost ended his career after a hair replacement procedure left him with a paralyzed vocal cord.

"Broadcasting is a brutal, often unfair business, where looks are valued more than skill," Buck writes, according to an excerpt in Sports Illustrated. "I was worried that if I lost my hair, I would lose my job. Okay,It was vanity. Pure vanity."

In 2011, Buck underwent his eight hair replacement procedure – but this time it went awry. When Buck woke up after the six-hour surgery, he was unable speak. He believes a cuff used to protect him during the procedure had moved and damaged his vocal cord.

"There are a lot of people across the country, as silly as this sounds, who obsess about hair loss. I would tell myself I needed to look younger, I needed to have thicker hair, I don't want to look older than I am. The truth of it is that it was an ego thing, whether I was on TV or not."

Joe buck's idol of beauty, youth, and hair nearly strangled the life out of him. This is what idols do... God gives us over to them and they destroy.

The female who craves an amazing body becomes anorexic

The male who craves an amazing body ends up on steroids or simply spending all his time at the gym.

The person who worships leisure and comfort spends most nights binge watching their favorite shows...

The person who worships money becomes a workaholic

The person who worships sex becomes a porn addict, or a pedophile, or a rapist...

To be very clear...

If we are Christians we can't lose our salvation and we don't have to fear God's punishment but we must fear God's discipline. God disciplines those that he loves and discipline hurts.

What are the idols in our lives?

One author writes,

"Idolatry is in the air that we breathe, and it's rarely explicit. Most people don't know it's happening. They're not saying, "I want this instead of Christ"; they're saying, "I want Christ plus this." To get at the idols of one's heart, one has to step back and consider the way one's desires shape his or her life. What drives us to work (or not work) the way we do? What causes us to eat and drink (or not eat and drink) the way we do? What desires lie behind the way we relate (or don't relate) to our spouse? What do we daydream about? Fantasize about? Long for? Do we often say, "If only I had this . . ." or "If only I were like this . . ." ? What is our desire pointing at? What is our affection pulling us toward? What is our end goal? Answering these questions will help one discover some of the layers of idolatry in one's own heart." (Um)

Idolatry is often subtle....

How do we know when a good thing has become an idol?

Often by asking these questions-

What causes fear? Fear is usually the result of idolatry.... most fears are inverted cravings.

What do we think we can't live without?

What defines us? where do we find our identity?

Where do we go when we are sad, lonely, and depressed? Idols can become god substitutes... (music, ice cream, binge watching, etc...)

Once we identify the idol we must repentant... which often involves asking God to help us fear him.

Because God loves us he will discipline us, just like he disciplined Israel.

How do we flee idolatry? By remembering God's discipline

How else do we flee idolatry? By remembering God's help!

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (ESV) — 12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Christians always have an escape hatch. No matter what situation you are in and not matter how strong the temptation feels there is always a way out. God will help you...

The context here is idolatry... not matter what idol is tempting you that is always a way out. in one sense, every sin is rooted in idolatry. But God will always help, if you cry out to him.

Paul says, that God will not let us be tempted beyond our ability... he knows what he is doing. He will always provide a way of escape. He will always help.

What situation are you currently facing? There is a way of escape. God will help you if you cry out to him. We often forget to do this...

Illustration:

The Ikea maze.... You forgot about the shortcut.... It is the escape hatch... It is there, you just need to remember that it is there and walk through it...

We need to remember that God offers us help. He provides a way of escape....

How do we flee idolatry? By remember God's discipline!

How else do we flee idolatry? By remember God's help!

How else do we flee idolatry? By remembering God's jealousy!

1 Corinthians 10:14–22 (ESV) — 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.

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?

Idolatry provokes the lord to Jealousy...

This is a complicated section. Let me try to summarize, Paul gives the Corinthian's two illustrations of why idolatry arouses God's jealousy.

His first illustration is from communion. In communion, Christians participate in the blood of Christ. something religious is happening here...

His second illustration is from the Jewish sacred meal surrounding the sacrificial system. Those who eat the meat participate in the altar. Again something more than physical is happening here...

Here is his point... If people participate in the blood of Christ during communion and they participate in the altar during OT sacrificial meals than they participate with demons when they feast on food in pagan temples in Corinth. This is bad.... You don't want to participate with Demons.

When god's jealousy is aroused, bad things happen. IF you don't believe me, just read the OT.

Application:

Here is the good news....

God's jealousy implies that God wants a relationship with us...

If a husband is jealous for his wife's affection it means that he loves his wife, he wants her affection. Jealousy is a good thing.

Here is the application... God wants a relationship with you and me. Unfortunately, he can't have a relationship with idolaters.

In eternity past God devised a plan to rectify this situation and reconcile himself to idolaters but it would be incredibly costly to himself.

This is the plan... God sent his own son, his one and only son, to earth to live a perfect life, free from idolatry. His son agreed to come.

His son died on the cross in the place of idolaters. Why? Because every idolater deserves crucifixion. Jesus died in our place...

He died in our place so that we could be forgiven.

Not only are we forgiven but we are empowered by his grace to flee idolatry.

All of this was motivated by God's jealousy. He is jealous for your love. He wants to be in a relationship with you... he wants your full affection.

If you trust him this morning he will reconcile you to himself and satisfy you like no idol every could. If you refuse to trust him this morning and you insist on worshipping your idols God will give you over to them and they will strangle the life out of you now and for all eternity. The choice is yours...

Why would you not choose Jesus? Lets pray...

This morning we have the privilege of celebrating the Lord's supper and we will do so by looking back at chapter 10...

In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul writes, "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?" The word for participation is the word *koinonia* which means to share something in common. It is often translated commune, which is where we get the word communion.

Robert Letham summarizes the "participation" of 1 Cor. 10:16 when he writes, "...it (participation) relates to our union with Christ and its cultivation by the Holy Spirit as we eat and drink the physical elements."¹

When we partake of the Lord's supper, when we eat the bread and drink the wine, we are reminded of the fact that if we are Christians we have participated with Christ in his life, death, and resurrection. How???? All Christians are mystically united to Jesus Christ through faith alone. When he died, we died in him. When he rose, we rose in him.

We participated with him....

This means that we died to the power of sin in him.

This means that we rose to new life in him.

This means that we have been forgiven of our sins in him...

This means that we don't have to be enslaved to idolatry in his power.

As you come forward to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus through this meal be encouraged...

Can I have the communion helpers come forward....

Let me explain the details...

This meal is only for Christians.

This meal is for broken Christians.

If you would like prayer....

¹ Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed publishing, 2001), 7.

Serve helpers...