

## Jason Upchurch - 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 - The Lord's Supper is Real Fellowship with Jesus

This morning I wanted to rearrange our normal order of service. This is my week to give the homily for the Lord's Supper. A homily is basically a short sermon of encouragement - it's what Tim, Andy, Chuck and I do before the Lord's Supper each week. Well, this is my week for the homily but our passage is also on the Lord's Supper. So I'm going to use this passage as something of a springboard into our worship around the Lord's Supper.

Let me just say that since the time I became a believer at 14 I have always cherished the Lord's Supper. It's always been a special thing for me. Without anyone explaining anything to me I knew that this was a sacred meal that not just anyone got to enjoy. That's about all I knew about the meal though and I didn't get to celebrate it very often.

The church I attended in high school and later the one in college only celebrated the Lord's Supper once a month and usually it was at an evening service. As a result of my work schedule that meant I maybe took the Supper a handful of times per year.

Over the years my view on the Lord's Supper has matured and changed. The first big change came about 8 years ago when I came convinced that the biblical teaching and pattern of the Lord's Supper is to take it weekly. Every time the church gathers on the Lord's Day. That's the pattern we see throughout the book of Acts and that is the teaching we see later in 1 Cor. 11.

On the Lord's Day you take the Lord's Supper with the Lord's people giving thanks to the Lord for the Lord's death until the Lord comes.

Then as I studied it seemed pretty clear as well that baptism precedes taking the Lord's Supper. There's no example at all in the Bible of a unbaptized believer, and certainly not one who takes the Lord's Supper. The way everyone knows someone has professed faith in Jesus is to be baptized. The way we continue to acknowledge this is that baptized believers take the Lord's Supper together. We see this all through the book of Acts. Someone believes, they ask what to do. What's the message? Repent and be what? Baptized.

And then we see them taking part in the normal course of church life including the Lord's Supper. So, just to connect the dots, if you profess faith in Jesus you need to be baptized if you haven't already. It's the command that we constantly see in Scripture preceding taking part in the Lord's Supper.

The next step in my evolution was that wine - not grape juice - is an important element in the Supper. Wine in the Bible represents the blessing and the favor of God. When God is blessing Israel he says their wine vats will overflow. And specifically we see promises in the OT that wine represents New Covenant blessings through Jesus. Jesus's first miracle was turning water into a massive amount of wine. Why? Because he's signaling that he is the promised Messiah and blessings are here. He says this cup is the New Covenant in my blood. He was holding a cup of wine.

Now, when we do the Lord's Supper we have some juice in the middle of the tray for those who either aren't used to drinking wine or those who, for conscience sake, have decided they just aren't ever touching alcohol again. That's great. This is not a salvation issue.

If you are a baptized believer in the Lord Jesus, we want you to come participate and not worry about whether drinking wine is going to violate your conscience. Nevertheless, wine is important.

The passage we're looking at this morning has really challenged my understanding of the Lord's Supper over the last few years.

And here's what I think Paul is getting at here: There is a real, spiritual interaction with Jesus going on when we take part in the Lord's Supper. It is remembering his death until he comes, but it's also really, truly communing with him. There's a real fellowship with Jesus we take part in every time we take the Supper. And I want to show you that from this passage.

If you've been here over the past month and a half, you know that since all the way back in chapter 8 Paul has been making an argument that Christians should not go to pagan temples and eat. He makes a lot of different arguments to support that because this issue gets to the heart of a lot of the problems the Corinthians were having.

But we come to the bottom line here this morning: a Christian can't go to a pagan temple and eat because it's a real participation in idolatry.

So what I want to do is go through this section 2 times this morning. First, I want to focus on what happens when someone goes to a pagan temple to take part in idolatry. And then I want to come back through it and show what happens when we take the Lord's Supper. The parallels are pretty striking. Oddly enough I think understanding the wickedness of idolatry will actually help us better understand the beauty of the Lord's Supper.

So let's talk about idolatry. This sounds odd, but we need to understand the mechanics of idolatry to understand why it's offensive to God and understand what he gives us.

### 1. Flee from idolatry. Read 14

The first thing we need to understand is that we run away from idolatry. We get as far away from it as possible.

The Corinthian church was dabbling with idolatry. They were winking and nodding and making clever arguments and excuses to bring idolatry in. That's what people have always done with every type of sin.

Paul says run. Get away from it.

But ask yourself this question: why is idolatry so dangerous? I mean, God says don't do it and there are very serious warnings here if we take part in idolatry, but why is it so bad if there's no real god behind that idolatry?

That appears to be some of what the Corinthians were arguing: "Look, when we go down to the pagan temple to eat, we know there's no other god, so the meat they sacrifice is sacrificed to nothingness. What's the problem? If you have a problem, what you're saying is that there's actually another god. We know there's no other god so stop you're complaining."

Not a bad argument, is it? How does Paul answer this?

### 2. Idolatry is actually demon worship. Read 20

Woah. We didn't see that coming. Paul says there's secret option number three. That when Christians go down to the pagan temple to worship - or dabble in any kind of idolatry - they're actually participating with demons.

When we engage in false worship it's not to nothing. And it's not to some other real god. It's worship of demons.

Anyone who partakes in any other kind of worship except worship of the one true and living God through faith in Jesus Christ alone is actually participating in demon worship.

Allah is not a god, but there is demon behind all of that worship.

Buddha is not a god, but there is a demon behind all that worship.

Same with Hinduism, the Norse gods, Greek gods, the Mormon gods, the Catholic god. It's all worship of demons.

In fact, Jesus says that Judaism without Jesus is Satan worship. Twice in the book of Revelation he says that Jewish people who reject him are part of the synagogue of Satan.

Jewish people. Aren't Jewish people the chosen people of God? Not if they reject Jesus. If they reject Jesus they're doing the same thing everyone else does who rejects Jesus: they're worshipping Satan and demons.

That's pretty radical. But we need to understand that dabbling around with idolatry is no game. It's serious business.

I was talking to Dave this last week and he had asked about Lent. And I don't know much about Lent except that when Jodee and I lived in Kentucky our friends lived right across the street from a Catholic Church that would do a fish fry every Friday and they had the best Fish and Chips. I mean, a huge plate for like 3 bucks. And Dave goes, "Isn't that kind like going down to the pagan Temple and eating meat...?"

Well, now that you mention it.

I mean, we just wanted a good meal. We're not actually in the sanctuary singing praises. And at 3 bucks are they really even making a profit? Maybe there's even a chance to start up a conversation with some of them about the true gospel - see, it's evangelism.

Is it though? No. My cute story about Lent brought to my realization that I had been eating really good food in a pagan temple. And when you combine food with worship, it turns into more than just worship.

### 3. When you combine food and worship it becomes intimate communion. **Read 19-21**

There is something intimate that happens when you combine food and worship. Adding food to worship - any kind of worship - takes the relationship to a new level. We know this even in human interactions.

If you've got a guy sitting at a table by himself it's called a 15 minute break. If you've got a guy and a girl sitting at a table together it's called a conversation. If you've got a guy sitting at a table eating with girl, what's it called? It's a date. You add food, you add intimacy.

Anytime you have two parties and you add food the stakes get higher. The relationship is more personal and intimate. That's why sharing a meal with people is a very intimate thing and one of the first things to go when there's a rift between people is they don't eat together.

The same is true with God and the same is true with demons. There's an intimate fellowship that takes place when we share a meal with God. We even see this in the OT. **Read 18**

His point is that when you went to the temple to sacrifice your sheep and then you ate some of your sheep in the temple - in the presence of the Lord - there was a communion, a fellowship that took place.

The word he keeps using here over and over is *κοινωνία*. It's the word we often translate as fellowship. We don't really have anything that quite translates this. Business partners are in *κοινωνία*, life long friends have *κοινωνία*, husband and wife have *κοινωνία*, and Christians have *κοινωνία*. It's a close relationship that binds us together.

If you have NIV/ESV the word used throughout this section is participate.

NKJV -> communion; NASB -> sharers, partake.

Those are okay, but they miss the closeness and intimate connection.

Paul is saying that when a believer goes to a pagan temple they are having an intimate encounter with demons. They are having *κοινωνία* with demons. The demon is really there and the Christians are sitting down having dinner with it.

This was understood by the Hebrews. When you eat at the Temple in Jerusalem you eat in the sight of the Lord. You eat in the Lord's presence. You go to Jerusalem because God is there. And so you and God are hanging out. You're enjoying his provision.

Same is true in the pagan world. One commentary said "In Homer, sacrifices are cheerful feasts in which the gods take part. Man and god are companions at table" (TDNT). **Read 21-22**

You can't be playing both side of the field. Why? Because you're either having intimate fellowship with demons, or with the Lord. You can't have both. If you try to have both you provoke the Lord to jealousy. You provoke him to all those incidents we read about a few weeks ago in the OT where he destroyed Israel for their idolatry.

And he he kind of adds a little jab at the end: Are you stronger than God? Who do you think's going to win out here?

Now, here's the deal. We take all that teaching about what happens when someone goes down to the pagan temple, all that intimate *κοινωνία* people are having with demons, and Paul says that's what's happening with us when we take the Lord's Supper.

So now let's go back through this with an eye to what's happening when we come to the Lord's Supper. There's some profound truths here. And I think you'll see that we are doing way more than simply remembering Jesus's death when we come to the table.

#### 1) The Lord's Supper is *κοινωνία* in the blood of Jesus. **Read 16**

So when he's talking about the cup, he's talking about the wine that we take at communion. When Jesus instituted the Last Supper he was using a specific cup at the Passover meal. There were 4 cups at the table and the third cup was called the Cup of Blessing. Or Cup of Thanksgiving. In the Bible, when you see that people are blessing God, what that means is that they are thanking him.

So the cup Jesus used to institute the Lord's Supper is referred to as the Cup of Blessing.

And he asks a rhetorical question here. **Read 16**

The answer, yes. Yes, when we drink the Cup it is a participation in the blood of Jesus. But don't we already have that just by being Christians? Don't we already experience the benefits of the blood of Jesus bringing us into the New Covenant and washing away our sin?

Well, yes we do. But what Paul is getting at is that there's an intimacy we share with Christ that is especially true when we take the Supper. Just like there's a closeness and intimacy people share when they get coffee together or a meal together. We have that with the Lord when we take the Supper.

And I'm not talking about transubstantiation. The Catholic Church thinks the wine and bread actually turn into the body and blood of Jesus. This is called transubstantiation. Trans meaning change. Substantiation meaning substance. The substance changes. It might look like bread and wine, but it's actually, truly, flesh and blood.

Catholics believe the wine and bread actually become the body and blood of Jesus. That's not what he's talking about here. Transubstantiation is not a biblical teaching.

Well, what is this fellowship then? We don't know for 100% sure because Paul doesn't elaborate. But here's the best I can understand. There's a sense in which Jesus is specially present in heaven, but also universally present with us everywhere. But when we take this meal, it's as though we're sitting down and having intimate communion with Jesus. We have *κοινωνία* - fellowship, friendship - with him at his table.

So when you drink the cup, it's as though you and Jesus are sitting down having a meal. And he's saying as you're drinking: it's my blood that's covered you. You're sins are gone.

**John 6:55-56:** My flesh is true food, my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

It's not literal blood. It's wine that represents the blood. But it's the way we have intimate fellowship with Jesus. This is the closest we're going to get this side of glory of sitting down and having fellowship with Jesus.

2) He says that taking the Supper is κοινωνία in the body of Jesus. Read 16

The bread is just like the wine. It doesn't turn into the literal body of Jesus.

That's not the case. What is the case is that as we eat and drink we are having intimate fellowship with Jesus. Again, it's like sitting at a meal talking with people. Well, there's not a lot of talking going on. Maybe you pray as you take the elements. But if Jesus were physically here, what would you talk about at this meal?

The elements tell us what Jesus would talk about: his body, which was crushed for your sins. There'd be a lot of conversation about that. We deserve to be crushed by the wrath of God for our sins, but Jesus in his infinite grace took that for us.

Those who come to the table are reassured by Jesus over a meal that God is no longer angry at them. He loves them and cherishes them as his own sons and daughters.

If Jesus were physically here we'd also be talking about his blood. Which was poured out for the forgiveness of our sins as the New Covenant promises. That's what we'd talk about. That's the communion - κοινωνία - we'd have with Jesus over the meal. Well, instead of a physical conversation Jesus gave us these elements as symbols to remind us.

"Hey, believer, remember: my body was crushed for you. Eat, taste this, smell this, touch this. Every bit about this is to remind you and encourage your heart that your sins are forgiven." It's the same conversation we have with Jesus about the cup.

With all of our technological inventions communication has increased dramatically. But it's not always reliable. We've been doing FaceTime more often and it's difficult when the connection breaks up. I'm talking to a family member and the screen goes blank. I can hear them, but I can't see them. It's clear that they can see me and hear me. There is interaction, it's limited and I want more but it's there.

That's the Lord's Supper. We can hear Jesus because we have his Word. But we can't see him. He can see us, hear us, knows us. But the interaction is limited. But it's the closest and sweetest interaction with Jesus we get this side of heaven.

This is the one act of worship where every single one of our senses is engaged. We see the bread. We hear his words "Take, eat, do this in remembrance of me." We touch the cracker, we touch the cup. We smell the wine and taste the wine.

This is the closest we get this side of glory to fully engaging Jesus. It's 3D interaction but we just can't see him.

So we have intimate fellowship with the body and blood of Jesus.

3) Breaking the Bread Brings the Body Together. Read 17

So this intimate fellowship meal that we take part in isn't just between me and the Lord, or you and the Lord. It's a fellowship meal that we also share among everyone else who is in the Lord. This is a meal that is enjoyed in the presence of the local church gathering.

When we come and take the one bread we are reminded that through faith in Jesus we are united to everyone else who is in Jesus. We come to this table and are refreshed in the fundamental truth that whatever else in the world might seem to separate us, the thing that binds us all together is Christ. And that's represented in taking the bread together.

Now, let me just say that the text seems to assume we are taking from one loaf of bread. That's the imagery. There's one big loaf and we come up and take our piece from that one loaf which symbolizes that we all receive our salvation from Jesus who is the Bread of Life.

But we usually use little pre-cut wafer chips. And I'll be honest as I was studying this passage this week it just seemed like on a simple reading that there is something we're missing by not breaking or tearing off a piece of bread before we eat.

Maybe this is a little nit picky, but it seems like this is an important part of the imagery to remind us that we all are fed by the same source. Luke says that Jesus...took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to them." (**Luke 22:19**)

I don't want to get all legalistic or anything about how we take the Lord's Supper but it seems like the closer we get to what the meal is supposed to symbolize the more we understand what God is trying to teach us and tell us in the meal itself. So I ordered some large gluten free matzo wafers that will be here next week that we can all break together.

I mean, we don't use Mountain Dew and Oreos - why? Because that's missing the imagery that Jesus intends us to be encouraged by in the Supper.

This meal is very much a meal that brings believers together. Look over at **11:33-34**. The teaching on the Lord's Supper in chapter 10 is incidental to the issue of idolatry. At the end of **chapter 11** Paul deals with it more properly because, as we'll find out, the Corinthians had completely corrupted the Lord's Supper.

I just want to read the end of his section. **Read 11:33-34**

When you come together. There is a uniting aspect of the meal. It happens in the context of the local church when the body of Christ comes together. We eat corporately. We wait for each other. Why wait? Because the meal is all of us commuting with Jesus together. Being reminded of the same great truths.

This meal isn't about filling our bellies, it's about filling our souls. Being refreshed again in the beautiful truths of the gospel.

So if you have believed in Jesus and followed him in baptism I encourage you to come and fellowship with him among other believers. Be encouraged and renewed again that God's grace was show in the death of Jesus. And encourage your heart that his grace will be fully manifested when Jesus comes again.