

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry -  
The 14<sup>th</sup> Verse

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*Corinthians Explained*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 10:14-33  
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Congregation, what do we make of the glory of God? What do we make of the glory of God? Is there anything more important than God's glory? The world is made for the glory of God, isn't it? And what a wonderful thing that people say about our church, but could say about our church, "In that church it's all about God's glory." What a comment if people would say, "That pastor, he is concerned with the glory of God." What a blessing if that is also true for you personally, say, "Oh, God's glory."

God's glory is the central theme of the Bible and the Apostle Paul in his epistles writes at least 60 times about the glory of God. And we know that the devil is not concerned with God's glory. He tries to ruin it. He tries to rob God of his glory. He is an idolater and he loves idolatry. He loves to give glory to another and therefore we read in Romans 1, for example, the Gentiles "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Consider that, the uncorruptible, eternal, great God being changed into an infinitesimal small image of something created. What offense. And is that not what sin is about? "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

So robbing God of his glory is the mother of all sins and if we love God's glory by grace, it makes all the difference for everything, for the marriage, for your finances, for addictions, for anything. Idolatry, worshiping something, someone else, preferring over God, and it always leave empty. So the Apostle Paul writes about that also in 1 Corinthians 10 about idolatry and the text for this morning's hour is 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 but let me only read verse 14 and verse 22. So 1 Corinthians 10:14 and 22.

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

So far.

The theme is the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, the 14<sup>th</sup> verse is, "Wherefore," right, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." That's the theme and you see the three thoughts in that

already. In the first place, we see there the word "idolatry." What is that? Are we guilty of it? How do we deal with that, idolatry? Why is he talking about that? Secondly, to flee from it. It's a command, "flee from idolatry." How do you do that? What is that? And in the third place, "my dearly beloved." You see, that's the tone, "O my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." So "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry": first, idolatry; secondly, flee from it; and in the third place, my dearly beloved.

Congregation, the Apostle Paul did not see the problem with eating meat that has been sacrificed to the idols. The Apostle Paul had to fear kind of, "Whatever. It doesn't make any difference. That meat has not been enchanted, it is not something different because those idols don't even exist and the meat sacrificed has not changed a bit. So if that meat is sold in the butcher shops close to the temples in Corinth, go ahead and buy your steak and buy your meat and take it home and prepare it and eat it. No problem because an idol is nothing and idols don't exist even. There is no Jupiter. There is no Zeus. There is no Artemis. There is no Diana. They don't even exist. They're just something on people's minds, an assumption. Only if I offend people with it, then I won't eat that meat. I don't think that's worth it to offend God's people, to hurt them, to make a problem about it. If that's the case, I will never eat that meat," he said.

Now let's start there. They are eating that meat, they take it home, they prepare it, the meat hasn't changed and the Apostle Paul said, "Don't even ask where you got it." But now the next problem is that some Christians of the congregation of Corinth are participating in those sacrifices, at least they go along to those worship services. For example, her husband says, they come along this morning, they come along to the temple where he was sacrificing, "Ah, come along." And she thinks, "May I come along with him? I don't want to hurt my husband. I don't want to make a problem and, you know, that idol doesn't exist even. The idol is nothing so I just go there and I don't sacrifice, I think this is all nonsense. So I'm sitting in that worship service of the idols and I think, this is just nothing because that meat is nothing and that god doesn't even exist so I can safely sit here." There was lots of pressure, right? Also children saying, "Dad, come along. Mom, come along. Children, come along because Opa is there and Oma is there and brothers and sisters are there, and you know, why don't you come along?" And some of God's people went along and they said, "You know, that meat is nothing, right?"

The Apostle Paul writes in our chapter,

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. 18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

So what is the Apostle Paul saying here? You know, when you read this piece over a couple of times, 14 through 33, there's a theme there. There are some keywords and those

keywords are "fellowship, communion and being partakers." So the Apostle Paul says, "Beloved congregation, if you go there, if you go to those worship services of the idols, you may not believe in that idol, however, you have communion with them, you have fellowship with that, you are partakers with that. You can't do that. You cannot do that. Although that idol doesn't even exist, you cannot have communion that way because you have communion in your own church. God's people have communion at the communion table and how can you be part of God's church and sit at the Lord's supper table and then the next day or so go to those temples? You cannot serve God and mammon. That is wrong."

So eating the sacrificed meat is okay but not the communion, not the fellowship, not being partakers of that altar, not giving the impression even that you have responsibility for that. Even although you don't believe in it, although you don't believe in that idol, you should not give the impression that you have communion with it because although the idols don't exist, that's true, but God is a jealous God, right? Is that not what he said, that God is a jealous God? "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" So because God is a jealous God, they don't belong in those temples, they may not even give the impression of sacrificing to them because God is stronger, is such a strong, holy, righteous God and he is a jealous God.

A jealous God. Have you ever studied that word "jealous"? Our God is a jealous God? Ever wondered is God jealous? You know, brothers and sisters can be jealous of each other but is this about God and God is jealous, what would God be jealous for, he has everything? That doesn't sound good, does it? But you know, the word "jealous" here is "wounded; wounded love." You know, jealousy is the rage of a man when he discovers that his wife is also going along with someone else. What anger, wounded love, and that's the word here. God is a jealous God. He is a strong God. He is stronger than us and it's dangerous. If there is any really dangerous, it's God. It's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Again, why would only being present at idol worship services provoke God? The answer is because it's not only attending and just be there, this participating, and therefore he says, "flee from idolatry." Compare the cup of the blessing with the cup of devils. Devils? I don't know. The Apostle Paul says eating meat is okay, and he says participating in the worship service is wrong, and those idols don't exist, and now he's saying they are sacrificing to devils. And that's quite a few times here in this chapter, to devils, right? To devils. Well, those idols don't exist but when people sacrifice to idols they, in fact, sacrifice to devils and they do exist. Those idols don't exist but the devils do and in those idols who don't exist, devils manifest themselves. So you may say, "I'm not serving the idols. I don't believe in those idols." But you are participating and you are serving the devil. Do not forget "that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice is sacrificed to the devils and not to God," verse 20, and Paul has a problem with their fellowship and communion with devils. "Keep in mind," Paul writes, "that you cannot drink the cup of the blessing and the cup of the devils. You cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." There's a huge emphasis on "cannot." It's impossible. It shouldn't be. It can't be.

"Therefore flee from idolatry." You know, looking back, verses 14 to 22 are about idolatry and having close contact with the devil. Close contact with the devil. The idols don't exist, right? Young people, this is important. The idols don't exist but the devil does, and if you're not serving the Lord, we are serving the devil. There are only two kingdoms. There's nothing in between. There's no third option. And we are born as pagans. We have fallen unto the devil and in our unconverted state we may say, "Well, I don't believe in those idols," but you know, you are participating and you are giving yourself in communion and fellowship with it and that's serving the devils.

Fellowship with them. So even if we do not attend such idol services, I think we don't, right? Yet there are many other forms of idolatry as well also today. We have theaters and sporting events and worldly parties where people are worshipping where sex is promoted, where alcohol is intoxicating, where drugs are used, and you may have participated. Maybe you say, "I didn't drink. I didn't use. I was not immoral. I just was there with my friends. Right, they're my friends and, minister, I don't believe in that stuff, and I don't participate in drinking and all the things. I'm only there, okay? I just like to talk to my friends and to be with them." It doesn't fly. You are having communion, you have fellowship with them, you are partakers with them and you are in the territory of the devil. Of the devil. Although something doesn't click in your heart, although you realize that you should not go too far, you are in that crowd and next time, no, I hope you don't do it anymore, but if you would, just look around if you belong there, if you belong in that crowd, if you're not kind of participating, having communion with the works of the devil. Do you see?

So they don't believe that the meat has changed, they don't believe that idols exist, but they still believe that they can be close to that. It's kind of a double standard. But it's impossible. There should be a separation.

Idolatry, let us consider idolatry, seven points about idolatry. There is some overlap, okay? Idolatry leads to other sins. Idolatry does not stay alone, it easily comes with fornication and greed and violence and more. You know, idolatry is a dangerous sin against the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And as soon as you have other gods, the floodgates are opened.

Idolatry does not match with prayer. You know, we commit idolatry when we don't pray or hardly pray because God hardly exists in our lives. However, if we truly know God, love him, believe in him, we speak to him, we communicate with him. You know, when young people start dating, right, do they communicate? Do they once in a while phone each other? Do they once in a while text each other maybe once a day? Once a day? Once an hour, maybe even more, hundreds of texts a day often, I understand. So that is because that girl is on your radar screen. She exists. You want to talk. You want to communicate. You want to walk together. So she might be your idol and compare that with your prayer life. Maybe once a day that you shoot a prayer up to the Lord? Or maybe not. That's idolatry. Idolatry is not praying. Not praying reveals who you are, idolaters, by making idols of each other, or of self, or of your reputation, of your success, of your whatever it is, your looks, whatever.

Idolatry estranges, estranges from God. It puts up a wall between God and you. It makes that gulf deeper and deeper and when you feel that distance, I know what's the matter, you are having idols and those idols create those walls. Ezekiel 14, "That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols." Estranged from me through their idols. You know, if you're estranged from God, you have idols, and if you have idols, you're estranged from God. You know what that means, right? God is foreign. God is strange. It's a different world.

Idolatry means not serving God. Serving. Serving God. You know the text from Matthew 6, "No man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one or the love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." It's about serving. So who are you serving? Please think of an answer for yourself. Who are you serving? Who are you having communion with? Who are you talking to? Who are you walking with? Who is most important to you? What is it? Or have you been estranged from God? You know idolatry provokes God to jealousy, as we talked about before. Provoking God to jealousy.

Idolatry means communion with the devil, we talked about that as well. Communion with the devil. Not only having two masters but as there are only two kingdoms. You know the devil is real, right? Leviticus 17, "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring." Or Psalm 106, "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils." Are we sacrificing our children unto devils? "Ye are of your father the devil and the lust of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own for he is a liar and the father of it."

Are you estranged from God? Is there that gulf? You know, it's the one or the other. If you are indeed unconverted, you're serving the devils. "For the love of money is the root of all evil." Listen to this text. It is harmful, the love of money is the root of all evil, "which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

So idolatry, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." Flee. Second thought: flee. Escape. Flee. Run. Make haste. Disconnect. Something has to change. The Apostle Paul is writing to the congregation of Corinth and he says to them, "That's going the wrong way. Flee, people. O dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." He's begging them, "Flee. Be firm."

Let me compare that to other words in the Bible close to "flee from." I read in Colossians 3, mortify, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Which is idolatry. Covetousness, greed, is idolatry. Mortify it. Now when an English word ends on "fy," mortify, glorify, solemnify, whatever it is, "fy" means "to make," and mortify, the word "mortal," do you see the word "death" in there, "mortal"? More? Mortify. Make it dead. Kill it. Kill it. Put your hands around the throat and

suffocate them. Kill them. Kill the idolatry in your life with both your hands. Kill. Flee from idolatry because it's serving the devil and he is a jealous God and you can't continue, and you can't serve both.

Do you hear that? Maybe you can think about that today, what you should mortify, remove, remove your offense, remove them, get rid of them. You know, we had a friend years and years ago who had a horse. It was a hobby, a horse, always taking care of the animal, when she came home from school first thing then to the horse barn. Oh, she was in love with that animal and was riding it and proud of it, and then she came under conviction of idolatry and she had to sell the animal. And I said to her, "You don't need to do that." She said, "Yes, I do. I need to do that. It hurts but I need to do it." She removed the idol.

Remove that whatever it is. Netflix? "I don't know why you're talking about that." Because some people are even addicted to the news. Think of that text in 2 Corinthians 6 that is often explained in the context of marriage but I think it's way wider than marriage, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," and listen to the rest, "for what fellowship," remember, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord," that's also closeness, "concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" So the Apostle Paul writes that for the church and he says, "You know, you cannot be unreasonably yoked together. You don't belong in that temple. You don't belong in that crowd. Then you're unequally yoked." It's a contradictory relationship sitting in church on Sunday and being part of devil worship on Friday or Saturday evening. That's unequally yoked. That's strange. It's hurtful. It doesn't work.

Separate, "Therefore come out from among them and be ye separate," be ye separate, "saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and will be a father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty." So separate from everything that smells of ungodliness.

Be filled. You know, we can say you're not supposed to go here and to do that and to say this, and you can just forbid a lot of things, but that leaves you kind of empty and young people and not only young people like to be filled with something, to live for something, to be excited about something because we have been made to worship, we have been made to glorify God, right? We have been made for that so when the minister says, "You can't do this. You can't do that." What's my life? You know, what about being filled with the holy God? What about filled with God's grace? What about filled with the Lord Jesus because he wants to be the Master. He is at our door and he knocks and he wants to come in and sup with you, and have fellowship with you, and that you may be a partaker of his holiness.

He is at the door and he knocks, "Flee from idolatry. Seek me." That means pray. Pray the whole day long. Read the Bible. Read the word of the living God. You can't be close to God if you don't read the Bible. Come to church. You know, we have less social control than before. I have a harder time to see who is in church and who is not. I know

some people are slacking off maybe. Maybe it is COVID, maybe they were not feeling well, but I'm afraid that at least some are not so faithful anymore. It's on your conscience.

Flee from idolatry. Seek the Lord. Be filled with him. You know there's more to receive than this world and than this life. Reprove. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them." Flee. I was thinking is there a Bible story about fleeing for the children. Remember Joseph in the house of Potiphar? "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness," how can I do that, the great wickedness, "and sin against God?" I can't do this. No. I can't do this. "And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled," fled, "and got him out." See? Think of temptations, think of idolatry, flee from it. Say no to it, bow your knees for it if there are addictions in your life.

Seek the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the image of God. He is the express image of God. He only can fill your heart. "And no man has seen God," right, at any time, "but the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." Oh seek the face of the Lord Jesus Christ and, "Repent ye, repent ye, turn ye, turn ye, let the wicked forsake his way." That's not my voice, it's not my calling, it's the Lord's calling. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, turn unto him, he will abundantly pardon," the Bible says.

Flee from idolatry. There is a great danger. God is coming and he's a jealous God, right? And he is stronger than I. Flee from idolatry, my dearly beloved, third thought. Suppose you could see the Apostle Paul's face, was it an angry look, was he really upset, did he speak with contempt? "Oh, those terrible people in Corinth. What they are doing, it's horrible!" Is there still some love and tenderness? "Wherefore, my, my dearly beloved." Do you see that? The Apostle Paul is talking to the congregation of Corinth and he loves them. He loves those people. He does not always agree with them. He thinks there are major issues he has to address but he loves them dearly even, "my dearly beloved." He feels a connection. He does not feel any better than they are. He is humble. He knows himself, doesn't he, that when he desires the good that the evil is close. He knows himself.

So he is not judgmental but friendly yet with authority and firm and a little threatening, right? He is a jealous God, stronger than we are. So it is a fatherly approach. He is not getting mad but he is patient and honest and firm and he spoke mainly to God's people, didn't he? He's speaking to God's people because I read in 1 Corinthians 1:9, the first chapter, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

So he's talking to God's people and says to God's people, "Flee from idolatry." What? You don't have to tell God's people to flee from idolatry, they flee automatically from that. Do you think so? Sorry, that's not true. There is that old man, there is that old nature that doesn't want to surrender and there is still evil, and there's a fight going on within the new man and the old man, and the old man is an idolater, okay? That old man is a sinful man so that's sad but this sermon is not only for young people who go to the wrong places, it is a sermon for God's people that have lacked in prayer, leaving the first love, leaving the first love. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

So he is accusing God's people that they lost their first love? No. No, they did not lose it, they left it. You know, when I lose my wallet accidentally, "Where is it? I lost it." But that's something different than leaving it on purpose. So the Lord is accusing his people in Revelation 2, "thou hast left thy first love. That first love did not go away from you but you left it." You know, sometimes we say that's how it goes, right, their first love disappears. There is a first love in the heart of God's people and there is a closeness and then that goes away. Perhaps not the proper wording, we need to verbalize it in a different way. It says, "thou hast left thy first love."

So flee from idolatry. You know, there's only one who did not need to hear that, right? Only one who never sinned against the first commandment and for whom God was always day and night everything, and always that bond with him and never estranged from him, and never forsook him, and never left him. You know who that is, right? It's our beloved Lord Jesus. "I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He glorified, right? That's why we started with glory. He glorified. We need to mortify. He glorified. "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself and shall straightway glorify him." The Lord Jesus glorified his Father and nobody had to say, "Flee and remove and think." Not at all. He trusted his Father. He knew his Father was close to him, never grieved him, never had someone else instead, never was looking away from him. It was his Father.

And when you compare this to the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 34 on page 70, you see more details. I'll read it to you. "What does God enjoin in the first commandment?" Now when I read this, think of yourself and think of the Lord Jesus. "That I, as sincerely as I desire the salvation of my own soul," as sincerely as I desire the salvation of my own soul, so deep, "avoid and flee from all idolatry." Our text just quoted that. "Idolatry, sorcery, soothsaying, superstition, invocation of saints, or any other creatures." So avoid, avoid, avoid, "and learn rightly to know the only true God; trust in Him alone, with humility and patience submit to Him; expect all good things from Him only; love, fear, and glorify Him with my whole heart; so that I renounce and forsake all creatures, rather than commit even the least thing contrary to His will." So what is idolatry? Idolatry is instead of or beside that one true God who has manifested himself in his word, to



contrive or have any other object in which men place their trust. See, avoid all those things.

We're going to close. You know, is there an expression in English "sitting on the fence"? I think so. Sitting on the fence. I go this way or that way, trying to serve two masters. In the Bible that is called halting, halting, hesitant, right? Hesitant. Like Elijah spoke to the people on Mount Carmel, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." That's sad, right? Is that you? You know, I service him again, my grandfather, who didn't go to church and was in a barroom on Sundays, and that word came to his mind and he saw people going to church on Sunday. He was in a bar and that text came, "Choose ye today whom ye will serve." And he did not believe. The next Sunday he was there again. He saw those people going to church, "Choose ye today." He just got his coat and he left and went to church for the first time. He became an elder and my mother was 11 when he died so I didn't get to know him. I have a picture of him on my desk and I feel kind of a connection to that man. "Choose ye today whom ye will serve."

Flee from idolatry and keep in mind that simple message: there are only two kingdoms and you cannot be part of two. You cannot. You cannot serve two masters. My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. Amen.