

Title: Flee Idolatry

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-21

Date: August 23, 2026

We're going to be in 1 Corinthians 10 today if you could turn in your Bibles with me. 1 Corinthians 10, and we're going to be in verse 1. Have you ever seen some of the silly things that people do out of superstition? One of my personal heroes growing up as a lad was Michael Jordan. And Michael Jordan, every time he went out and played a bulls game, he was wearing underneath his red bull shorts, his blue University of North Carolina shorts, because he really believed that he was somehow controlling his future, even though he had been given immense talents from God, he believed he was controlling his future by making sure that those uncomfortable bunchy shorts were under his red bull shorts every game that he went out.

Some sports superstitions are stronger than others. Some of the most superstitious of all people out there, like baseball players. Pitcher Turk Wendell brushed his teeth and chewed licorice between every inning before he went out. Wade Boggs would only eat chicken the day of a game, and he used to draw a symbol in the dirt, which meant to life, every time before he went to bat. For old country Greek people, spitting on the bride is supposed to ward off evil spirits for starting a new marriage. And I'm very grateful we don't spit on the preacher for luck before, you know, those kind of things. Zach and Colby are thankful that that tradition never got legs.

People are constantly trying to control the uncontrollable. And superstition is a way to control your destiny. It's rooted in some form of self-confidence. Somehow, I get to pull the strings, somehow something that I do gets to control the future. And inevitably, superstition is one of the sure signs of idolatry. Idolatry contends that I'm in control. I'm somehow shaping my destiny. I determine what is right and wrong, and I ultimately hold sway over the outcomes of my life.

And even Christians can become somewhat superstitious and a wee bit idolatrous in their hearts. They begin to assume that they're confidently in control. They begin to mistake the symbols of our salvation with the means of our salvation. They can think that they are manipulating God himself. And this can subtly creep in even to the most Christian person's mind. In Corinth, and for that matter, the rest of Christianity to present day, there have been people that believe that communion or baptism appeases the wrath of God and covers over their sins. And in 1 Corinthians 10:1, Paul is going to explode this superstition and expound fully upon idolatry. The Corinthians have become overconfident in their abilities and their rituals. They have turned God's good things into superstitious twaddle. So, join with me this morning reading 1 Corinthians 10, starting in verse 1.

It says this, *"For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 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. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

Now, this is recounting the history of the Israelites immediately after the Egyptian captivity. The cloud was the pillar where the presence of God was manifested. They all passed through the Red Sea when escaping Pharaoh. God literally saved them through water. They escaped from the enemy through water. The same spiritual food that they ate was supplied directly by God. It was manna. When Moses struck the rock at Meribah to bring forth water for the Israelites, they all drank the same drink in the desert. And the physical food and the drink was spiritually provided. In some fashion, Christ himself was with the Israelites thousands of years before his birth in the stable. It is the pre-incarnate Christ. And the baptism it speaks about is identification with someone else. They were baptized into the faith of Moses. They identified with Moses, and they were also identified in some fashion with Christ. Paul's point is that these people have had powerful experiences. They have communed with God in a very real way.

Something maybe even beyond what we've experienced today. They have communed with the visible manifestation of God's presence in their lives. They've had a real experience. They had a shared spiritual experience. And this passage is a strong warning to those that think communion or baptism, or rituals or church attendance can please God. These things are wonderful. They're symbols of something extremely significant. But they do nothing to appease God and make him overlook sin, ongoing sin in the life of Christians. Paul tells this story because the Corinthians were overestimating the power of the Lord's Supper and baptism by thinking that if they just ate this food and drank this drink that God would be pleased with them. And that they'd be safe from his judgment even if they went on participating in the idol feast of their Corinthian friends and culture. This participation of the Corinthians in the feast for idols does not mean damnation for those that participated. I don't want you to be confused here.

Sinfulness does not mean damnation for those that fell in the desert and for those that did not enter the promised land. It meant that they did not get to enjoy the blessings of God on earth. Their lives were shortened by disobedience. Their servanthood to God, their effective ministry was shortened on earth. To bring this point home, I want you to consider the life of Moses. Moses. Even Moses fell in the desert, and we know that he is with God because of the transfiguration in Matthew 17 in the New Testament. Moses just before he died, God takes him up into the mountain and he looks down into the promised land that his feet never touched in this physical life that he lived in this body. Never touched it. And he looks down into that land that he will never possess, and God took his life. He died.

And yet, in Matthew 17, we see Moses and he's standing right in the middle of the promise land and he's talking to the fulfillment of all promises. He's talking with Jesus Christ. And so, Moses falling in the desert, his performance that robbed him of spiritual blessing, that robbed him of life on earth, that did not keep him from communing with God ultimately and eternally. We understand that. Moses displeased God. He fell in the desert, but he enjoys everlasting life.

So displeasing God in 1 Corinthians 10:5 is not necessarily about being condemned to hell. It certainly wasn't in Moses' case. It does mean that the Israelite's sin became so displeasing to God that he could not bless them any longer. They were removed from the blessings of God and their bodies fell in the wilderness. The Greek word is *katastronnumi*, which means literally to strew or to spread. And today, things have not changed much. The Corinthians, the Old Testament Israelites, they thought they could please God by showing up for the functions, doing the stuff.

People today still go to mass. They go to church thinking that they appease God through lighting candles, giving first confessions, maybe saying hail Mary's. Baptists in their conceit think that they could go to church, and all is well. We invent all of these like forms, *ex opere operato*. We do the function, if we do it right, we think that it has a necessary outcome. But the power is not in the functions. The power is not in the rituals. The power itself is not in the sacraments. It is in what they signify. And it always has been. Rituals don't appease God. Rituals merely point us to look at God and his gifts more closely.

God's Son, Jesus Christ, appeased God once and for all. He is the substance and the object signified by all ritual. He is everything. All the sacraments, the things we do point to Jesus. He is the gift of God, the sinful man that we might draw near to God and fellowship with him forever. In our passage, we've touched on why Paul is using these illustrations concerning the Israelites and their wilderness soldier. And Paul is going to spell it out even more clearly for the Corinthians in verse 6. Look in your Bibles there with me.

1 Corinthians 10:6, *"Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 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.' We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day." Verse 9, "We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer."*

These folks that were so blessed by God that he personally led them in the cloud. These people that witnessed the Red Sea part by God's power and then saw Pharaoh's army destroyed in totality. These people that saw water brought out of a rock they decided to reject God's faithfulness even though they had a visibly manifested presence of God. What does this tell us? It tells us that education and mere experiences do not fix us. Seeing or learning things doesn't make us better people. As P.T. Barnum once said if you give a college education in order to reform a young man who steals railroad spikes, he will someday steal the railroad with that college education. You don't change the heart and if you haven't changed the heart, you've changed nothing. The human heart is the issue and until we deal with that we're grasping at straws and dealing with mere symptoms.

Paul is speaking to regenerated saints at Corinth. Regenerated saints. And here is what he says specifically in this passage to regenerated people. He tells them in verse 7 first don't be sexually immoral. If you remember Exodus 32 recounts this event. Moses comes down from the mountain and pleads for the people before God and God relents but has Moses appoint the Levites to carry swords throughout the people to restore order and 3,000 people were killed.

People that communed with God that had a tremendous experience committed sexual immorality. Why is sexual immorality a natural progression of idolatry? And my contention is every element that's mentioned here after it mentions idolatry they're all symptoms of idolatry. Why is said sexual immorality a natural progression of idolatry? Idolatry is replacing the rightful God of the universe with yourself. Idolatry is a power play where you become the arbiter even of right and wrong. And that is this definition of idolatry or self-worship. I will ascend to the heights. I will be the sole determiner of what is truly right and good. And that is the definition of idolatry which is so alive and strong among us even creeping into the household of God.

Basically, the little gods have decided they can recreate without consequence the Genesis institutions established by the high God of heaven. And so, the Israelites rose up to play and committed sexual immorality because they had replaced the true God as the objective law giver. Idolatry tempts us to replace God, to rationalize our sins, to suffer the delusion that we control our futures, and this can be subtle. It can be very subtle in a body.

Second, when we look at this passage another injunction implicit in this passage in verse 9 is don't put Christ to the test. Paul's speaking to the Corinthians, regenerate saints. What does this mean? How did the Israelites put Christ to the test? This is in Numbers 21. In Numbers 21 the Israelites are wandering the wilderness and the people spoke against God and against Moses and they said why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness for there is no food and no water and we loathe this worthless food. The people of Israel rejected God's good for vision for them and called it worthless.

They were starving in the desert. He provided manna from heaven; a miraculous food and they still raised a fist of defiance in God's eye, and they tell him we loathe it. We loathe what you've provided. To do such a thing is to put Christ's patience to the test. Even Jesus has limits. Thank goodness for Jesus's patience with mankind but even this does not last forever. They had an idolatrous image in their mind of how a good God would treat them and when God did not give them their every immediate desire they showed their lack of trust. This loathsome food, why did you bring us into the desert to die? They treated God's goodness with contempt and the Israelites put Jesus to the test. The pre-incarnate Christ, giver of all gifts, don't put Jesus to the test.

Do you, Christian, treat God's gifts with contempt? You've been given and lavished so many good gifts. It's the manna from heaven put specifically in your life by a God who does take care of you, has promised never to leave nor forsake you. Do you treat God's good gifts with contempt? One of those greatest of gifts that's probably been given to you is living in America. You have won the lottery of birth. The lottery of birth. But how often do we bemoan our circumstances and say, woe is me? My Honda is not as nice as my neighbor's Lexus. Or my soul is in turmoil because my house is not as nice as others. Or we complain endlessly about how bad it is to live in our era of history in this nation at this time. Has it not ever been worse? And you live in a prosperous moment. You live in a nation that's largely stable. And there's bumps but yes, do you not realize as a child of God, everything you've been given is part of God's good gifts to you? You are blessed and God keeps and preserves you. These are God's blessings you are grumbling about and spurning. The scripture says that every good gift is from God.

Mark Hunt was preaching from Psalm 37 or had a Sunday school on it. And it says in that passage, it says, you know, I have been old, and I have been young and now I'm old. And I have never seen the people of God forsaken. I can say the same thing. God is good to his people. He promises to care for us. He promises to provide for us. He is a good father. What good father, when you ask for an egg, hands you a rock. That's not our God. And Psalm 37 goes on, you know, I have never seen God's children begging for bread. Why? Because he provides. He's faithful in all seasons. Do you treat God's gifts with contempt? When you live among the most prosperous of all nations on earth, do you second guess God's good gifts? This is a form of idolatry, a serious one. And yet we grumble incessantly about the nation we live in. Others have had it far worse.

And if to make the point more explicit, verse 10, he says, don't grumble, don't grumble. And this passage, I believe, harkens back to Numbers 16. The rebellion of Korah has just occurred. God in Numbers 16 has opened the earth to swallow the rebellious religious leaders who tried to take over and supplant Moses. And after seeing the earth itself open, this is what the people of Israel said in Numbers 16:41, *"But on the next day all of the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, 'You have killed the people of the Lord.'"* What? What nonsense is this? Moses didn't do this. That was God. Moses doesn't have that in the purview of his power. This is God they're talking to, complaining, and grumbling against.

And God sent the destroying angel, the same angel that had snuffed the lives of the firstborn in Egypt, who killed 70,000 Israelites in David's time for the sin of the census, and who destroyed the Assyrian army for Hezekiah. God does not like sin among his people. Are we getting the point? Murmuring itself is dissatisfaction with God's sovereign will for our lives. Our grumbling and complaining tells God, I don't like what you have provided me. You are discontent with his provision in whatever season of life you're in. God does not take our murmuring lightly. We challenge in those moments God's wisdom for our lives when we complain about our provisions and circumstances. Somehow, we know better. We don't have infinite vision.

And what is the antidote to a grumbling heart? What is the antidote? As an aside, I'll tell you it's this, contentment in God's faithfulness, especially in suffering. During times of suffering when you are content in God's faithfulness, this glorifies God and complaining dishonors him. It questions his wisdom. It questions whether or not he really is a good father. And he is. He really is. Paul is using this passage to demonstrate that partaking of spiritual food and having been baptized do nothing to keep God from punishing sin among his people. Idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God's patience, and grumbling are still punishable by God even when you perform the rituals or when you have had a spiritual experience as the Israelites had.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:11, read with me there, *"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. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."* These events were captured in scripture for those of us in the end times. And ever since the coming of Christ we've been in those end time moments. The Corinthians thought that they were so strong and that the idols were nothing that they could flirt with

the fringes of idolatry, of idol worship. And idolatry, especially at Corinth, if we went back into the history there was sexual perversion, sexual worship, all kinds of crazy things. And they had feasts, pagan festivals, and everything else. They would serve meat and who doesn't like a good hamburger.

And so, the Corinthians would kind of go into those festivals and be on the fringes of it. And the warning is take heed lest you fall. Take heed. These things are captured for their benefit. God had our generation in mind when he had these stories pinned into the Bible. And the message is simple. If you think you're standing, wake up. Wake up. It's easy to fall.

Someone might say, I have avoided sexual immorality and the big sins. But have you avoided grumbling? Do you not understand? This was a slap to me. I grumble all the time. And when I'm grumbling, I'm saying, God, what you've provided is not good enough. I want something else. You may have avoided sexual immorality, but if you put Christ to the test by ignoring the fact that he has provided time and time again and you still don't have enough faith that he will meet tomorrow's needs. And this is a sin and a sin that a gracious loving father deals with because he's looking out for us. It's a serious sin that shows that you don't truly trust him.

Do you think you can whitewash your sins by just showing up at church and go through communion and baptism and some of these other witch rules while still living in your idolatrous condition? Communion and baptism are fantastic. They're exact obedience to what God has prescribed for us to do, but they're pointing to something extremely important that outweighs them. You're not saved by being baptized. You're not saved by communion. None of these things. When we look here, they have no effect if you're just trying to use them to please God and then trying to live in sin. Mere superstition, belief, and mere ritual does nothing.

The falling mentioned here in our passage is not necessarily falling away from the faith. The falling is referring to falling under the judgment of God. It coheres with passages like that of Hebrews 12:7-8, *"It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."* These things that are happening that are coming upon the Corinthians because they're flirting with the fringes of idolatry, these things, they're falling under the judgment of God, and they're basically being treated as sons.

There is a prayer that all of us should pray at one time or another. And the prayer is this, Lord, when I depart from your side, discipline me quickly. Discipline me, Lord, so that I won't waste my life. Treat me like a beloved child. Keep me from idolatry. Keep me from thinking that I'm the center of all things. Keep me from sexual immorality as if I know about these things better than you. Keep me from grumbling and complaining. Keep me from thinking I know better than you. Help me to trust in you. To encourage the Christians to avoid falling, Paul talks about the power of God that is available for them to avoid sin. It is not some superstitious right or incantation. It is related to avoiding sin to begin with by trusting in God.

Look at verse 13. It says this, *"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."* *"No temptation has come upon you that is not common to man."* What is Paul saying? He is saying somebody has already been there and they've already avoided that. You're not unique. Don't feel like your temptation is unique or overpowering. You have an ungrateful grumbling heart. There has been a brother or sister in more dire circumstances than yours that managed to pray and even thank their Lord for those circumstances.

I'm immediately reminded of the story of Corrie and Betsie ten Boom. The story of Corrie and Betsie ten Boom, they were interned in Ravensbruck, one of the most notorious of all concentration camps. And when they were in this camp, they were introduced into a new barrack. And in that new barrack, the lice were so horrible, it was literally eating the clothes off of their body. They made clothes out of natural fibers in this time. The lice loved it. It was like dinner. And then after they're done with the clothes, they dined on you. And it was horrible, itching, scratching, incessant. And Corrie and Betsie, during their Bible time, came together and Betsie told Corrie, you know, the Lord has asked us to be thankful in all things. And Corrie responded, Betsie, I could never be thankful for the lice. There is no way that I could be thankful for the lice.

And time went on and they found that they could gather at night and the guards would leave them alone and they would have a Bible study. And they said it was like the doors of heaven opening when they were reading the Word of God. And you could hear it being translated into Czech, into Polish, as they read it in German and people translated it for the others that were in the barracks. And it was wonderful. And it was wonderful. And then one day, Betsie came and said, I understand why God has given us the blessing of the lice. Why do we have those Bible study times that are uninterrupted by the German guards? Because the German guards are so afraid of the lice, they won't step across the threshold of our barracks. Why have we not been raped by the guards, which all the other women in the camp were being misused and abused, why has that not happened? The guards so feared the lice that they would not touch Betsie and Corrie ten Boom and all the other believers that were stuffed into that barracks. And at that moment, Corrie and Betsie's hearts broke and they praised God for the lice.

Why has God provided any of our times and seasons? Why has he done that? Because he knows best. And there's still occasions for praise in every single one of those moments. It's in these moments that we are able to praise him. It's in these moments because we know he's a good and faithful God that we can trust him even though our circumstances are dire. It's in these moments that we are called to break forth and praise in all circumstances. Even in those circumstances, the world can't imagine that you would be thankful for them. God is faithful. Often so many Christians fall into temptation because they doubt the faithfulness of God. Is faithfulness not our own? Is our ever-present strength? Christian people who fall into sin doubt that God can supply something as good, exciting, intoxicating as the things that they're being tempted with.

Idolatry in our generation is probably most expressed by the sexual immorality of pornography. Young men especially are not content to wait for God to provide the fulfillment of their desires. In those

moments when they give in, they have a small God, a powerless God, a monochrome God. They have fashioned an idol from their own imagination, a weak God that condones their sins. And he is not so. What they do not understand is that God is faithful, which is what our passage says. He satisfies our desires with his good things. The scripture is replete with passages that say how deeply faithful God is to us. Psalm 107:9, *"For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with his good things."* This applies to all of life. Do we patiently wait for God to supply? Do you trust that God is reliable? Do you trust that God is faithful to you? God does not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to respond. He always finds a way for us. And notice he doesn't find a way out. He finds a way for us to endure it.

Do we trust God enough in these moments of temptation that he is faithful, that he will supply a way to endure it? No matter what we face, God will help us pass through that valley. And even the temptation of idolatry can be avoided with the power of God. Verse 14, *"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak to a sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not participation in the body of Christ?"* Paul's talking about communion here. Communion is participation in the blood and body of Christ. What does that mean? It is koinonia fellowship with him. We fellowship with Christ in his death.

It's a similar kind of fellowship that the Israelites had with Moses. The bread and cup is not a magical means of manipulating God. It points to the fact that you are in communion with a faithful, reliable, trustworthy God who will provide what you need. Communion is a picture of once having there been hostility between God and man, but you are literally sitting across the same table from God. And you have fellowship and communion with him because of Jesus Christ. You are now friends. You can look at each other and not have hostility any longer. And Jesus Christ suffered for us that we might be sons and daughters of the Most High. In his train, because of his good gift of grace, comes every good gift that we experience in life.

Having shed his blood for you, to be bound to you, and he is bound to us just as we are bound to him, do you think he will abandon you or won't give you good things? Flee from idolatry because you're bound to Christ. Flee from sexual immorality because you're bound to Christ, and he will give you the good thing in the right season. Flee from grumbling and complaining and testing Christ's patience. And that good gift of communion helps us to develop our relationship, our participation with Christ. It guards us from evil because it constantly reminds us that we are bound to a faithful Jesus. A Jesus no longer our enemy, but our good and faithful friend who is sitting at that table with us. And when we are bound to that faithful Jesus and we truly trust him, he will provide proper love and proper time.

Flee from sexual immorality. He will provide the stuff that we need. Flee from idolatry. He will give us what is truly desirable. And for the most part, we do not have wall niches, shrines, purification rituals, meat slaughtered ritualistically, etc. Our idolatry is not so blatant, but we do have materialism, entertainment to the extreme, sports, pornography, and a ton of other things that people obsess over, spend their time with, know the most intimate details about, and pretend as if they could not live happily without them. Idolatry did not die with the making of images of wooden stone.

As some pastors have said, we are idol makers. It doesn't take much. We'll fashion an idol almost anything. In our hearts we are constantly fashioning idols, good things from God that we make indispensable to our own happiness and sense of self-worth. The Corinthians in our passage are trying to have God and their idols. God plus being able to grumble whenever they want. God plus sexual immorality. God plus questioning God's faithfulness and direct contradiction to the evidence of the cross. They thought it was no big deal if they participated in the idol worshiping feast in their community. The problem is, according to our passage in verse 17, that these feasts were fellowshiping them with something absolutely unholy.

Verse 17, *"Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participating in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 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. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"*

In verse 18, Paul says, *"Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?"* By using the word participation, Paul means that they are invested in what happens at the altar. When the priest sacrificed, God took away guilt for the people's sins, forgave their sins, and established peace and fellowship instead of hostility. The eaters of the sacrifices would have been the priest who ate their allotted portion from the Lord. And Paul draws an analogy between what happened in the temple in Jerusalem and the practices in the pagan temples of the Corinthians Day. In a pagan temple, some of the food was offered to the idol, but what was left over was eaten in the temple of the idol. In Israel, those who consumed the sacrifices received benefits from what was offered on the altar.

When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we identify ourselves with what Christ did and we share in the benefits of his sacrifice. Verse 21, *"You cannot partake of the table of the Lord,"* share in its benefits, *"and the table of demons."* There is no room in the Christian life for God number one and God number two. Corinthians, you cannot serve two masters. Corinthians, you can't have God the Father and your idols, too. Christians, today, you can't have any contenders that are even subordinate to God number one. There is one God, and he does not tolerate others, even our subtle American idolatry, and it's subtle. *"You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."*

There is no room for a sports god. If sports is the thing that makes you singularly happy, and they say when you touch somebody's idol, it makes them angry. If you can't watch the game, you get pretty upset. Perhaps it's an idol. Perhaps it's a problem. There is no room for a career god and the Father God. I once had a boss who was so excited about a new job that was offered him with hundreds of thousands of dollars and everything else. His church elders came to him and said, hey, I know you're already moving and everything else, but have you even given for a moment the fact that you were in a community of Christ, we've held you accountable, we've taken care of you, your wife, and your children, have you looked at churches in the other community that you're going to as a priority? He had not. And he discovered he had an idol of career, and he didn't move. Sounds extreme, doesn't it? But you can't have a God number one and a God number two. There is no room for the sex god and the father God.

Idols have one purpose in the Lord's economy, and that is to be smashed and to be shown for the frauds that they are. And invariably it happens in our life. They provoke God to jealousy. We can't benefit from demons and expect the Lord to bless us. We can't be self-indulgent, self-centered, self-worshipping, and expect simultaneously to be God-revering and Christ-centered. We worship our idols for the benefits, whether those benefits are excitement, self-gratification, wealth, power, prestige, etc. And the Bible and Christ are telling us we cannot serve idols for these types of benefits and still benefit from having God's good pleasure and blessing.

Verse 22, *"Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"* So how might we provoke the Lord to jealousy with our idols today? And I know it's easy to beat this idol up, but the OSU football season starts next week. OSU football is not a bad thing. I've enjoyed a few games myself, but sometimes, you know them too, but people are beside themselves with delirium. Ever conjure up those kinds of feelings for God? Ever conjure up that kind of devotion for God's Word? Some people won't miss a game, but they'll miss an entire week of communing with God and his word and treat it as if it was nothing. But it's the end of the world if you miss the ballgame. Could it be that that's an idol?

I can't tell you what all the idols are. We just know they're there. The idol, the human heart is an idol maker. We make them out of many things. We have idols of stuff that we must have that almost make us sick with longing and dissatisfied with what God has provided us right now. We have idols of career and personal advancement. We think the world will end without them. Our own personal beauty can be an idol and become our self-identity, our self-worth, and yet illness and infirmity can appear in an instant. And ultimately everyone's beauty and physique will crumble with age. We idolize ourselves as the center of the universe with our own needs and wants and forget our times and seasons are in his hands. We grumble against God's provisions that we think are too small. We question his wisdom in appointing our travails and even sorrows. We call the very God of heaven into doubt of whether or not he truly knows best. And God is disturbed by that.

Anything, if you look at your life and you think it's too small and you don't have the right stuff, you don't have the right spouse, you don't have the right beauty, all these things, and you grumble and complain about it, understand anything I now possess as a child of God is a gift of God to me because he cares for me and he knows best. No matter how humble, no matter how seemingly insignificant, no matter how painful our current circumstances are, it is a sin to despise and grumble about it. And God is a jealous God. Some people think that jealousy is a bad thing. They're acquainted with the jealousy of a child. That is not the jealousy of our great and righteous God. At least our God wants us. And I'll persevere in only examining that one facet of jealousy as I begin to land this plane. But at least our God loves us. At least he takes notice when we don't love him deeply or long for him passionately.

The idols of life are uncaring, mute, and loveless. A jealous God is a passionate God. It is a God who looks out for our very best. He can't stand being second place to anything, even to a spouse or a ball game or a Lexus or a fat bank account. God's jealousy means that he will fight for us. He will fight for our hearts and souls, even if he must fight us to get our proper attention, even if he must discipline us. Because our

hearts have turned away from him in idolatry. Don't make God fight for you. Trust him. Dethrone your idols consciously. If not, Christ will dethrone your idols. It's what he does.

Everything will be laid low before the feet of Jesus Christ. He will show them as rubbish and worthless. And if you don't cast them down yourself, it will probably be painful because he disciplines those he loves. He's a jealous God. Car's rust, bank accounts shrink, economies collapse, people fail you, they stumble, they fall, sports teams lose, houses molder, leak, and fall out of fashion, beauty fades and withers, and yet God remains faithful. He remains faithful and steadfast and unchanging. And you were meant to be satisfied by that faithful God who will never forsake, never abandon you. Nothing is meant to satisfy your soul, Christian, but him.

Let's go to prayer.

Dear Heavenly Father, I Corinthians 10 is a plea from the Apostle Paul that we would flee from idolatry, that we would flee from sexual immorality, that we would flee from grumbling, that we would flee from testing Christ himself by calling the good gifts worthless. Lord, I pray over us today that when we depart from your side, discipline us quickly. Discipline us so that we don't waste our lives apart from you. Treat us as your beloved children. Open our eyes to see our own sin. Open our eyes to see our false idols. Help us to cast them down and that the only glorified being in the place of all those idols would be you, would be the faithful God, the faithful God that we trust for moment by moment, trusting even when the travails in life and sorrows are so deep and so crushing. We trust in you. We know that the good God holds our future, and he will not fail us. And so, Lord today, may your people praise you with their hearts, their minds, and their bodies. May they serve you and you alone. And Lord, may they be mindful of the idols that are all around us as it was in Corinth.

It's in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Available online at: <https://gracechapelwl.org>