



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 10:14–22

“Idol Feasts and Our Feast”

1 Corinthians

TRANSCRIPT

Let’s begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee again for the privilege that is ours to study the Scriptures.

We thank Thee for the apostle and his concern for the church at Corinth in which he was so instrumental, and particularly in their founding by the preaching of the gospel. We thank Thee for the truth that is found in this great letter. We thank Thee also for the fact that it is so applicable to us today in so many ways. And, Lord, we attribute that to the fact that this is literature that comes from Thee, inspired of God, useful and profitable for all aspects of the church’s life and for our life individually. We ask Thou blessing upon us as we continue our study. May the Holy Spirit be our guide, and may we be responsive to the truth that the apostle is setting forth.

We pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Message] Well, tonight our subject is “Idol Feasts and Our Feast,” which, of course, is the Lord’s Supper. And we’re turning to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 in verse 14, and we read through verse 22. Paul writes:

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 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? For we, *though* many, are one

bread *and* one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or that what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s Table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”

Now, that is possible to be rendered in a little different way. The tense is the present tense, and you might expect: Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? But it is possible, and some of the Greek grammarians specifically speaking about this text, suggest that it’s something like deliberative subjunctive. In that case, we would render it “Or shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy?,” even though the tense is present. So that’s a possibility. That seems to make more sense. Are we provoking the Lord to jealousy, or shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy, seems a bit better. Are we stronger than He?

Idol feasts and our feast: the apostle has been giving us counsel concerning meats sacrificed to idols because evidently in Corinth, that was a serious problem. It was a problem because the Corinthians knew, that according to the teaching that Paul had given them, that all things were possible for them to eat, but they were invited to idol feasts in which animals were eaten which had been dedicated to one of the heathen idols, and it raised the question of are we permitted to eat such food. And so he’s been giving counsel concerning meats sacrificed to idols. That evidently was a serious problem because it’s not only mentioned in the epistles of 1 Corinthians, but it also is mentioned in the epistle to the Romans in chapter 14 as I have mentioned a couple of times to you.

It was common for heathen banquets to take place and in the consecration of the banquet there would be a cup or cups and also a libation in honor of the gods. The first cup in the celebration was a cup that was offered to Jupiter, the second cup was a cup that was offered to the nymphs, and the third cup to *{Jupiter Soter}* or the Jupiter the Savior. To participate in these three cups which

circulated among the guests, was not this to do an act of idolatry, one would think and to put one's self under the power of the spirit of evil. As really as—by the Jews who sacrificing their offerings put themselves under the influence of Jehovah, and the Christians sitting around the Lord's Table by partaking of the Lord's Table put themselves, that is in the eyes of people, under the influence of the Lord God. So if we sat around a heathen table and ate meats sacrificed to a heathen idol, were we not committing ourselves to them? It raised the question of consistency.

Now, the apostle evidently felt this was a serious enough problem to discuss it in some detail, and we've been looking at the discussion of it. The principles have been given in chapter 8, verse 1 through verse 13 and, particularly, near the end of the 8th chapter, he deals with the matter. He says, “But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.” He acknowledges that we are able to eat anything and drink anything, but there are other questions that must be answered in connection with it.

So he urges them to not use their liberty in such a way that it will harm others. He goes on to say,

“For if anyone sees you who have knowledge (that is that you can eat) eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge, shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?”

They may not know what you know, and in violating their conscience, they would be guilty of sin whereas you, knowing the teaching of the Word of God and that it was permissible for you to eat the things that were sacrificed to idols because, after all, they're only meats and idols are nothing, you might be the means of the sin of others whose consciences would be harmed by eating things that they felt themselves were wrong for them.

So the apostle is given examples in chapter 9. He's talked about his own experience and how it was in the ministry of the Word of God, his right to have support from the churches, but he did

not take, support. He sacrificed what was his by right for particular reasons and that’s why, of course, he’s making the point why we should sacrifice the eating of things sacrificed to idols if we’re going to harm the conscience of some of the weaker brethren. His examples are both positive and negative.

He talks about the experience of Israel in the Old Testament and about the fact that even though they were God’s people, the fact that they were God’s people and the fact that they observe the sacrifices and observe the ritual of Israel did not keep them from the possibility of judgment. In chapter 10 he talks about that specifically. He says, “Our fathers were under the cloud, they all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses, they ate the same spiritual food, they drank the same spiritual drink, they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them,” the rock he says that was ultimately Christ.

But with most of them God was not well pleased because, even though they had these privileges, they violated them. And he talks about the fact that some of them lusted, some became idolaters, some engaged in sexual immorality. He says, “Now, let us not tempt Christ as some of them also were—also tempted and were destroyed of the serpents. And do not complain, as they also complained.” All of this was designed to show that privileges do not necessarily mean that we are not subject to disciplinary judgment.

So this is the background. And now one final argument I think remains for the apostle, and this rests upon the analogy of the tables of the idols and the Lord’s Table. And the idol feasts and sitting around the table enjoying the feasts that would—in which the food was dedicated to an idol raised the threat of idolatry. And that’s what the apostle will talk about specifically, the question of idolatry.

Even God’s elect are not secure against discipline when they worship or falsely worship other gods. What is interesting about this, I think, is that it raises also the question of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches—and I’m speaking of the Protestant churches in which the doctrine of the grace of God, salvation through faith, is believed, because these questions are raised there too in a slightly different way, particularly with reference to the Virgin Mary.

It, as you well-know, of course, the Roman Catholic Church has conceptions concerning the Virgin Mary that, to my mind, are opposed to the Word of God. They start out with Mary’s so-called Immaculate Conception. That’s not a reference to the virgin birth. So many evangelicals, I think, think that the term *the Immaculate Conception* is a reference to the virgin birth. It’s rather a reference to Mary’s birth in which it is claimed by the Roman Catholic Church that she was preserved from original sin.

Not all Roman Catholics, for one of the greatest, Anselm, believed that she herself was born with original sin. It is also claimed that she is the mother of God. Now, she is not the mother of the *{logos}* insofar as his nature is concerned. She is the mother of the incarnate *{logos}* insofar as his human nature is concerned. And the term “mother of God” with those limitations and explanations would be permissible, but, of course, without any explanations, the false impression is created; as if a human could be the mother of God. She is the mother of the human nature of our Lord, and he is one person possessed of two natures. And so in that sense it could be said, but it needs a lot of explanation, which is not given ordinarily.

It is also believed by the Roman Catholic Church that the body of Mary has been assumed to heaven. There is no biblical support for that at all. It is also claimed by some that she is the coredeptrix; that is, the incarnation did not occur without her permission. That, of course, is a reference to the statement in Luke chapter 1 in verse 38 when the angel comes and announces the coming birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Gabriel says with reference to this, “How can this be”—when he has told her what is going to be. Mary says,

“How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called

barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your Word.’ And the angel departed from her.”

In other words, in Luke chapter 1 in verse 38, she gives her permission that the incarnation may take place. And in that sense, she may be called *coredemptrix*.

It is also claimed by some that she is the *mediatrix*; that is, the mediator. After all, the Lord Jesus is stern, just. And she is kind, loving, and compassionate. And so the term “*mediatrix*” has been used by some with reference to this. The term the “*Mother of the Church*” was used by Paul VI in the promulgation of the Vatican II documents in 1964. It’s very striking in the light of all of this that Mary’s final word in the New Testament, the final word that the New Testament attributes to her is this, listen to it,

“Whatever he says to you, do it.”

Isn’t that interesting? The final word of our Lord—of the New Testament that is attributed to Mary is, with reference to our Lord is, “Whatever he says to you, do it.” In other words, it stands in Scripture that she gives to him the accolade of the ultimate authority and not her. I mention this because in the Roman Catholic Church, it’s—well, it’s denied theologically by some—practically Mary is adored in the sense of worshiped. And, in fact, appeals are made to her for the answer of prayers.

So the question of idol feasts raised the threat of idolatry, and idolatry is one of the sins that many of those who are professing Christians do commit. I think it’s important because today we have a movement in evangelicalism in which evangelicals are returning to the Roman Catholic Church. Tom Howard, from an important Christian family, the family that was the publisher of the *Sunday School Times* for so many years—I know Tom’s wife—returned to the Roman Catholic Church. Richard John Neuhaus, outstanding Lutheran, converted to the Roman Catholic Church

within the past five or six years. Scott Han, a Christian man, a professor in a Bible college in this country, has converted to the Roman Catholic Church and has written a book entitled *Rome Sweet Home*. And many evangelicals have been disturbed by it and concerned about it.

So the quest—the threat of idolatry is with us today. Now, we want to look at the situation as set forth in chapter 10, verse 14 through verse 22. And what Paul does in verse 14 and 15 is to give us a very solemn admonition against idolatry. Listen to it again.

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.”

Flee from idolatry, that’s a—that reminded us of something, did it not? Back in chapter 6 in verse 18 using the same language, he says, “Flee sexual immorality.” Flee fornication. Here, flee idolatry. Avoid occasions such as the idol feasts in heathen temples. One thinks of Joseph’s example so far as fornication was concerned and how he fled and escaped from the wife of the Egyptian official. And so here, flee from idolatry. Do not in any way lay yourself open to the possibility of the sin of idolatry. And a Christian who entered into the celebration of feasts in honor of heathen gods laid himself open to that possibility. And so the apostle warns them to take a serious attitude toward it. Flee from idolatry. And he also adds another thing, and I don’t know whether this is a bit sarcastic or not. Probably not. But he says, “I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.”

Now, the reason I say it might be—might be—a bit sarcastic is because back in chapter 4 in verse 10 remember he had said, “We” (talking about the apostle and those who were with him) “We are fools for Christ’s sake but you are wise in Christ; we are weak but you are strong; you are distinguished but we are dishonored;” drawing the contrast between the apostles and their company and the proud Corinthians. And so here he says I speak as to wise men. He uses the same adjective there. And then in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 19 he, again, refers to the Corinthians in this way, and he says, “For you put up with fools gladly, since you *yourselves* are wise!” The immediate

preceding verse, “seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast.” He hates to do this, he says, but he’s going to have to do it. For you put up with fools gladly since you yourselves are wise. And there the sense again is that way. So it’s evident that so far as the Corinthians were concerned, they made, evidently, much of their wisdom, much of their gnosis or knowledge, and so the apostle speaks to them now in verse 15, “I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.” A strong warning against idolatry; it pertains to us, too.

There are many ways, really, in which we commit idolatry but often we don’t even realize it because whatever we put before the Lord God in heaven is our idol. Our God is our supreme concern. The one or thing which is supreme with us is our God. But since it has no reality as the true God, it’s our idol. And many of us act as idol worshipers, not even realizing it, because there are some things that are more important to us than God himself. It’s the Holy Spirit’s constant work within our hearts to help us to realize that.

One of the last words that the New Testament contains is a warning. Last verse of 1 John who wrote—John who wrote the last of the books of the New Testament, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Idols: those things that mean more to me than the things of our Lord God in heaven.

Now, verse 16 and 17 through verse 20, he points out what I call the message of the analogies; that is, the analogy between the table of the demon, the table of the Lord, and the table of Israel. Three tables come before us here; two of them are forbidden. One, the table of the Lord, is the important one. But in verse 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?” This is a very interesting reference because it’s a reference to the Passover service and, of course, the Lord’s Supper which had its beginning in the Last Passover.

I don’t want to go into great detail here, we don’t have time to do this, but there were four cups that were partaken in the Passover service. The third of them was the one which probably was the cup of the Lord’s Supper. Because you’ll remember in the last Passover, in the midst of the

observance of the last Passover, the first Lord’s Supper was celebrated. And our Lord wove those two together.

And when the third cup was taken—that third cup, I think, most exegetes believe, was the cup of the new covenant, which is shed in our Lord’s blood when he took the wine and stated those words. So here, he says, “The cup of blessing which we bless.” And he’s talking there, I think, about the Lord’s Supper. Verse 25 of chapter 11, we read, “In the same manner also, He took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”” And so, “The cup of blessing which we bless,” evidently a reference to what we call the Lord’s Supper. He says, is it not the communion, is it not the participation, in the blood of Christ? And this word suggests a common participation in his death and the benefits secured by it. Because the blood, the partaking of the blood—in the case of the Lord’s Supper, we partake of the wine—but it represents the partaking of the blood of Christ and remember that it is by the blood of Christ that we have justification by faith.

In Romans chapter 3 in verse 25, the apostle says these words in the familiar text, “whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.” So to partake of the wine is the figure for the partaking of the blood of Christ. And it’s the blood of Christ by which we have our justification. In chapter 5 in verse 9 of the Epistle to the Romans, we read, “Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

So we have justification through the blood. We have the atonement that our Lord accomplished through the blood. And this cup of blessing is designed to represent our participation in it. Every time we sit at the Lord’s Table, we are signifying our participation in the benefits of what our Lord accomplished when he died upon the cross at Calvary. I don’t want to say too much about it, because in chapter 11 it comes up more specifically.

It goes on to say in verse 17, “For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.” One bread, one body, one loaf suggests one body. Since there was one loaf, that represents the unity of the body of Christ; and all partake of it. I’ve been in many places where they use, not what we use in our Lord’s Supper, but they use a loaf. And the loaf is passed around. When thanks is given for the bread, one of the elders comes forward, takes the cover off of the elements, and there is a loaf of bread. Now probably it is a loaf from one of the well-known bakeries but, nevertheless, it’s a loaf; it’s one, one loaf. And so the elder will take the bread and break it, and then the bread will be passed around, will be separated, it will be passed around. And every individual in the audience will take a part of the one loaf.

Now, we pass around a different kind of thing that doesn’t suggest that except that up here when the elders or whoever gives thanks comes up and breaks those crackers, that’s what it’s designed to signify. So from now on when you’re seeing them doing that, think of one loaf; one loaf, because it signifies the unity of those who are there to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. One loaf suggests one body and the reason, further, that the unity is stressed is because that all partake of that one loaf. That’s important, so the apostle seems to think. We, though many, are one loaf and one body; for we all partake of that one loaf.

Now, that’s the table of the Lord. The table of the Lord, of course, is the—what someone has called the Sacrament of Christian Unity then. When we sit around the Lord’s Table, this is our celebration of our unity in Christ and what he has accomplished for us.

When I was in California this spring, there’s a fine church in Brentwood that I had never been in, but the man who is one of the leaders and one of the elders of it listens to our tapes, and so he invited me out, and I spoke to them on life in the new covenant. That was the general theme. But on Sunday morning, we had the Lord’s Supper; very much like we observe the Lord’s Supper in Believers Chapel. But one interesting difference was this: at the conclusion of the partaking of the elements, in that particular church—I think it was called the Grace Bible Fellowship. I’ve forgotten—but anyway, at the conclusion of it, all of the members—there were about 450 people, I

would imagine. It was an auditorium a little bigger than our auditorium—they all got up out of their pews, went over to the side, and so there was—they lined up in the front and all down the side, all across the back, all down the side, all across the front, so there was one complete circle in the local church, and they observe the Lord’s Supper. Now, that was the last thing they did, in order to stress the unity of the one body in Christ. I was touched considerably by it because as they did this, they sang a hymn from memory. It was a very pretty hymn. I’ve forgotten what it was. But anyway, they sang that and it just gave me, at least, a good sense of the unity that is found in a healthy, local church.

Well, Paul is stressing that one of the things that the Lord’s Supper stresses is the fact of our unity. It is what might be called the Ordinance or the Sacrament of Christian Unity.

Now the second table is the table of Israel. He says,

“Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”

So those who ate the sacrificial flesh in Israel, after the sacrifices were made, the priests took their part, and then some of the remnants may be eaten. Those who ate the sacrifices—sacrificial flesh were regarded as being partners in the altar or fellow partakers in the altar. To partake of a Jewish sacrifice was an act of Jewish worship. And in the case of the heathen sacrifices, to partake of their sacrifices, was to partake of their religion as well, of their worship. So you see what Paul is driving at. He’s trying to show that if we partake of the bread and the wine that signifies that we belong to Christ, then it’s contradictory for us to partake of the Jewish sacrifices, or it is contradictory for us to partake of the heathen sacrifices, both of which would be contrary to the apostolic teaching.

And so he says, “What am I saying then?” He’s already said it’s all right to eat anything, remember? He’s already said that, so he has to raise his question. He says, “What am I saying then; that an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?” Because I think if I were one of those people that was doing what Paul didn’t like, and he were to say to me, “You shouldn’t participate in these sacrifices or give any suggestions of it,” I would have a question for Paul. I’d say, “Paul, wait a minute. Back earlier in this epistle, you say that is perfectly all right to eat anything because an idol is nothing.”

And so that’s why he raises the question here and says, “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.” That rather in my text is a but. It’s a very strong *{alla}* which means “but.” But that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons.

Now, that raises some more questions, doesn’t it? You know the reason that these are questions to us is twofold. One, we didn’t grow up in Israel, and we, perhaps, are not quite as familiar with the Old Testament as we ought to be, and we’re not as familiar, perhaps, with the New Testament as we ought to be. Paul regards the idols as representing idolatrous concepts and values in the minds of the devotees. In other words, the person who’s warned by Paul is warned against having part in the idol feasts because—not because the demons are specifically in what they are involved in, but the demons are behind those things. We don’t eat a demon, for example, if you were partaking of the heathen sacrifice. What he’s saying is that the—as he goes on to say, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. So Paul regards the idols as representing idolatrous concepts and values in the minds of the devotees. Back of what they were doing, there did ultimately lie Satan and his hosts of infernal beings. So in that sense, they’re ultimately involved.

And in the case of the Corinthians, what were they doing then? Well, in the first place and most significantly I guess, we could say that what they were doing—and remember the idol is nothing but a block of wood, a stone, and nothing more—but what they were doing is they were

robbing the true God of the glory that was due to him alone. Because in partaking of the idols which had been—the idol food which had been dedicated to the Jupiter or whoever it might be, the false God, they were in essence, they were robbing the genuine Lord God of heaven of the glory that was due to him. Because that’s what idolatry is. We are taking the glory of God and giving it to something else. And so they were doing that. It also was evil because it meant that man engaged in a spiritual act and directing his worship toward something other than the one true God, was brought into relationship to the evil and lower powers represented by Satan and his hosts.

So not only were they involved in doing something that was pleasant to Satan and his hosts, they were robbing God of the worship of him and his name which is the ultimate that we should be involved in. So the harmful effect of idolatry was not the simple eating of food, but it was what the simple eating of that food represented. It was not that the food was bad. It’s that what lay behind it is bad.

F. F. Bruce comments, “Pagan deities had objective existence, but they were real and powerful as concepts in the minds of their devotees whose lives might be profoundly affected by the values which these deities represented.” And so the apostle, looking at the Jewish tables, goes on to talk about it.

And finally in verse 21 and verse 22, he talks about the things that ought to restrain us from following that pattern. He says,

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s Table and of the table of demons. Or do we (or shall we) provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?”

Christian sacraments do not preserve us from the sin of idolatry. It’s possible for people who know the Lord to be dishonoring to the Lord in the things that they are doing. This was evident in the case of the Corinthians in the minds of the apostle. The worship that they were carrying out

was contrary to the true worship. The worship of Christ and the worship of the demons are incompatible.

Christianity and other religions are mutually exclusive. And Christianity and Judaism are exclusive. Christianity and the heathen religions are exclusive of one another. Occasionally you'll find people in the religious world seeming to work if they possibly can to find some common ground between the religions of the world so that we all might have unity in our religion. There will be unity in religion one of these days. But it will be after the judgment of all false religion, and all the false religions in which there will be one religion, the religion of the triune God in heaven and that religion alone. There is no common ground shared by Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity. This is not because polytheism objects to an extra god in the pantheon of their gods. They wouldn't object. Islam wouldn't object to having another god, and certainly the other religions of the earth wouldn't object to having another god, but what they particularly object to is one who like our Lord Jesus Christ says, “No one comes to the Father but by me.”

The heathen religions of the earth don't mind another god. But they do mind the truth that there is only one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the thing that can by no way find approval among them. Our Lord said, “No one comes to the Father but by me.” Moses said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

And I say polytheism would not object to an extra god. But when it realizes that that extra god is to be a God distinguished from all other gods and the supreme God which rules out all of their gods, there's vicious opposition to it.

We as Christians must not ever compromise the oneness of our God, the triune God and Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If we do, we've compromised Christianity. All of the things that Jesus Christ says: I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep; I mentioned John 14:6; all of the other things. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. All of these truths which the apostles and our Lord perform, those

are things that as Christians, we must not only state but we must defend vigorously because that is honoring to our God in heaven. It's he who has said those things are true.

Well, what are the things that might preserve us from the sin of idolatry? I'd like to look at these last two verses here. “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.” This is the exclusivism of Christ's fellowship.

Now, this is not something that is found in just one or two places. Let me read just a few texts. I think I have time to do this. In Galatians chapter 5 in verse 4, the apostle writes these words. Galatians 5:4 he writes,

“You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified from—by the law; you have fallen from grace;” (estranged from Christ.)

2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 14, verse 15 the apostle writes,

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What communion has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?”

The Lord Jesus himself said in one of his very short and meaningful statements in the Gospels, Matthew chapter 12 in verse 30, these words,

“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters abroad.”
Look at it again, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not scatter with me scatters abroad.”

This is a kind of a truth that we all recognize in many ways but sometimes we don't realize that it applies to us in our daily lives. Here is a young man, falls in love with a young lady. And he tells the young lady that he loves her, and she falls in love with him. So they think. He tells her he loves her. She tells him that she loves him. But she discovers that while they have wonderful times together and he professes his love, she discovers that he actually is seeing two or three other women. And she also is requiring—he's also requiring her that she only see him. That's not the kind of relationship we'd like to be in, is it?

And so you must have a meeting of minds about that. Well, that was very simple but, you know, that's what we as Christians are with reference to the Lord God in heaven. We have affirmed to him our devotion to him. We've affirmed that we love him. We've affirmed that he's our Savior, that he is our eternal love, that all that we are and all that we have, we have offered to him. How do you think our Lord feels when he discovers that his interests are not really supreme with us but only partially? How do you think he feels? Do you think that he would be jealous? The Bible says yes. Actually the Bible says specifically that. Verse 22: “Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” In other words, idolatry, the idolatry of unbelievers and believers, because unbelievers have an ultimate responsibility to the one God, too, is that which provokes the Lord God in heaven to jealousy.

So if you think that because you attend church on Sunday, maybe even occasionally come to the Lord's Supper, that everything's all right and you can live the rest of your life with the Lord God not having the supreme place in your life, you are disturbing a jealous God. I think it's most important for us as Christians to realize our supreme relationship is to the Lord God in heaven, our only love in that sense and not in any way compromise our relationship to him. Christ's fellowship is exclusive. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord's Table and the table of demons. You come and partake of the Lord's Table and then you engage yourself in things that ultimately make you submissive or rely upon Satan and his hosts, you yourself come under the words of the apostle's warning here.

Now, he goes on to say in—I should mention this—you may remember that in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 in verse 2, the apostle made a statement that pertains to this. He said,

“For I am jealous for you (Corinthians) with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ.” (One husband, not two, not three; one husband, one person.)

So shall we provoke him to jealousy? This, by the way, is an allusion to the Old Testament. I'd like for you to turn back there. We've got 10 minutes, and this is important. In Deuteronomy chapter 32 in verse 11. This is a text, incidentally, that the apostle considered to be very important. Did you know that? He quotes it two other times in the Epistle to the Romans in chapter 10 and chapter 11 of that epistle. But here in verse 11 of Deuteronomy chapter 32, verse 11, we read these words—did I say 11? That is not the text that I'm looking for. Just a minute.

[Audience] 21. Verse 21.

[Dr. Johnson] Yes, that's an evidence of my typing. Yes, it's 32:21, and this is what he writes,

“They have provoked me to jealousy by *what* is a no god (Hebrew text said no God); They have moved me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.”

Now, what is striking about this is that in the passage that we are looking at in Deuteronomy chapter 32, who is the Lord? Well, it's Yahweh. It's Yahweh. It's clear. It's Yahweh. But of whom does the apostle speak when he uses the text? He's talking about the Lord's Table and the table of demons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? What Lord? The Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what I'm trying to point out—I've been doing this, you know, throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews too when we did this in a number of places, to point out that the writers of the New

Testament, when they used text from the Old Testament, they used a number of texts which in the Old Testament simply were referenced to the Tetragrammaton, or Yahweh, as he is called by scholars today generally. Our old term was “Jehovah.” We tend because we don’t recognize this to read all passages in the Old Testament which have to do with Lord as a reference to the Father. The apostles did not interpret the Old Testament that way. They referred a number of the passages in the Old Testament which referred to the Lord or Yahweh to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So I’ve been saying the doctrine of the Trinity is that there are three persons within the Trinity, and it’s perfectly permissible for us to speak of them as Yahweh, the Father; Yahweh, the Son; Yahweh, the Spirit. All three of the persons of the Trinity are referred to in the New Testament by the term “LORD.” Or passages in the Old Testament are referred to the three persons of the Trinity in the Old Testament said to be Jehovah or Yahweh, in the New Testament, Father, Son, and Spirit. In other words, they recognized that there are three persons in the Godhead. They did not fully understand it as the Christian church has come to understand, but right there is the germ of the doctrine of the Trinity.

And so here, do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? It’s the Lord Jesus Christ, specifically, that he is referring to here. And we do provoke him to jealousy when we do not give him supreme worship over all other rivals of him. The deceit of the bride would be horrible in a human situation. The deceit of the bride of Christ is horrible in the spiritual situation.

And finally in verse 22, he says, “Are we stronger (than Thee) than He?” By attending such feasts, do the Corinthians intend to excite his anger in the highest measure? It cannot but be brave with impunity if you want to be angry at the Lord God, if you want to reject him, if you want to try to live your life apart from him at the same time you claim him as your God, you will discover that you will come under divine discipline.

As he says, are we stronger than he? No, we are not stronger than he. We cannot brave this kind of resistance to him with impunity. If we, as Christians, bow down before the host of the Roman Catholic Church, before the Eucharistic bread, which suggests the sacrifice of Christ, and in

that way contrary to the teaching of the New Testament, we will make our God in heaven jealous, and we will ultimately be disciplined.

This raises a question for us today, of course. We don't have—we're not tempted to take part in an idol feast, but we are tempted to do the same kind of thing in our personal relationships and also in our church life. Should Christians go into a Mormon Temple and sit there during a service? Should Christians go into a Christian Science Church, sit there during the service? Should Christians become part of meetings of Unity Church? What about all of the world's religions? Should we sit there as if we are part of that worship?

Or let's bring it just a little closer to home. Should we attend modernistic professing Christian churches and act as if we are sympathetic with what is being taught when what is being taught is the denial of the eternal sonship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ of the divine Trinity of the saving ministry of Christ and the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross? Shall we sit there becoming a part of an organization which does not teach Christian truth, although it professes it? There are denominations today in which that precise situation exists. In their pronouncements they deny the faith, but at the same time they profess to be Christian churches. Shall Christians become apart of that?

J. Gresham Machen was a leading New Testament scholar. He was at Princeton Theological Seminary when Princeton Theological Seminary, a great bastion of the faith, began to drift in the latter part of the 19th century and then in the early part of the 20th century, it drifted quite a far way away from the truth of God. Still had a few men in it that were good men; there was, of course, the great theologian Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield.

Someone came to him near the end of his life and asked him, “Would it not be all right for us or would it not be desirable to start a new church?” Now, Warfield was already close to 70 years of age, his life was practically gone—that's what it is when you get that age—and he said, “You don't split rotten wood.” But some did leave. And Westminster Theological Seminary was founded, and Gresham Machen wrote a little book called *Christianity and Liberalism*. You know what he concluded?

Marvelous book, I think unanswerable. It's been acknowledged to be that. He pointed out that liberalism; that is, professing Christianity as we know liberalism but disbelief in the person and work of Christ, is really another religion. That's what it is. The Christian religion is bound up with the saving ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sins; offered the atoning sacrifice; accomplished our justification; accomplished our atoning sacrifice by which we come to belong to the one true God in heaven. We don't have that. We don't have Christianity. We have something else.

So Paul's words about the idols is a warning to them, to remind them that observing the ordinances does not necessarily secure them from divine discipline. May it have its effect on us, as well.

Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these words from the Apostle Paul and for the warning of them. We know, Lord, that the Scriptures, in more than one place, stress the fact that Thou art a jealous God. And those who claim to worship Thee, who claim to have Thy name upon them, we may often make Thee jealous. Lord, deliver us. Deliver us from any kind of affection for others that in any way clouds the total relationship to Thee and submission to Thee that we desire to have. Thou art our God. There is no other God beside Thee. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Savior. We worship Thee through Him. In this audience, Lord, may there be none of us who are deceitful and betray the one who has done so much for us for eternity.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.