

Absolute Allegiance

1 Corinthians 8, 10

The human heart is easily deceived and easily divided...but God longs for the absolute allegiance of an undivided heart, overflowing in sacrificial love for our fellow believers in Christ.

Good or bad?

- Money
- Possessions – house, car, cell phone
- Status – college education
- Position/power – manager, owner, mayor, governor
- Hobbies – hunting, shopping, college football, wine tasting
- Sex

What if I told you that these things are all bad? These are the idols of our age. Not an exhaustive list, but all of these things are idols in our age.

What if I told you that these things are also all good? Gifts from God to be enjoyed by His children. That's more like it.

Of course, each item could be either. Discernment required!

Idolatry

- Bible – disconnect for us when we encounter passages on idolatry
- We are not accustomed to talk about “idolatry” in every day conversation
- We don't bow down before statues of wood, stone, gold
- Bowing down is just a symptom of a much deeper problem; THE fundamental problem of fallen human nature.
- Ezek 14:3; 14:5; Idolatry of the heart
- Crave something that God has not provided
- Colossians 3:5. Greed = idolatry; greed = “to have more”
- Root of idolatry = ungrateful heart. Romans 1:20-21
- You are vulnerable to all forms of idolatry
- Corinthians were falling back into idolatry

Culture of Corinth

- Corinth was an idolatrous city
 - Most prominent structures devoted to false gods
 - Worship of false gods permeated entire culture
 - Meals at home; emperor; birthdays; athletic games; civic events
 - Common practice – sacrifice food to gods
 - Portion to gods; portion for people to eat
 - Sacrificing meat was rare; too expensive. Fruits, vegetables, incense
 - Eating meat was occasional practice; not every meal
 - U.S. – haven't eaten unless there is meat
 - Amarillo. The Big Texan. 72 ounce steak
 - Central Asia – big bowl of rice and 2-3 pieces of meat
 - Meat sacrifice – portion to gods, family, sell the rest

- 3 scenarios that believers faced
 - Buy meat in the market – meat was dedicated to idols
 - Eat in a friend’s home – meat was dedicated to idols
 - Eat meat at a festival in a pagan temple – meat dedicated to idols
 - Under pressure to eat.
 - Sharing meal important socially to maintain friendships
 - To advance socially, politically.
 - To not be seen as a strange, anti-social person
- Church in Corinth
 - Jews converts had no problem staying away from overt idolatry
 - Most converts were from pagan backgrounds; worshipped idols; friends and families worshipped idols.
 - Church planted – Paul told them to give up idols
 - Most churches complied – 1 Thess 1:9
 - Now they were drifting back and rationalizing their behavior
 - Paul makes the argument again, but he is frustrated...

Theological Foundation – 8:1-6

- There is no God but One (8:4; 8:6a)
 - Dt 6:4
- Jesus is Lord (8:6b)
 - Son – Creator, redeemer, sustainer
 - Implication: we owe God our absolute allegiance of the heart
- Idols are not real gods
 - Food sacrificed to idols was not sacrificed to real gods
 - BUT idols are real and numerous – 8:5
- Idols are dangerous things – 10:19-20
 - 10:1-4 = this was a believing, redeemed community
 - God redeemed, guided, protected, provided
 - 10:5-6 – that fell into sin
 - 10:7-12
 - Exodus 32:1-6
 - All vulnerable; crave what God has not given or commended
 - Garden
 - Eat, eat; wanted the one tree that was off limits
 - We have inherited a vulnerability to shiny things
- Solution? Ruthlessly destroy all false gods in your life; absolute allegiance to God

Absolute Allegiance

- Flee idolatry – 1 Cor 10:14
 - Romans 14 = Jewish dietary practices
 - Matters of conscience
 - Modern examples – drinking alcohol
 - 1 Cor 8-10 = Going into idol’s temple; Sharing an idol meal in idol temple
 - 1 Cor 10:14-22
 - Acts 15 – don’t eat meat sacrificed to idols
 - Practices associated with former lives they were unwilling to give up
 - Syncretism
 - Solomon – 1 Chron 29:19; 1 Kings 11:1-8

- 10:14.
 - “flee” = “seek safety in flight”; escape; run away from danger
 - 1 Cor 6:11
 - 1 Tim 6:11 – flee from the idol of money
 - 2 Tim 2:22
 - When you see an idol, FLEE
 - All your old practices that divided your heart’s allegiance
- Flee to God – 1 Cor 10:12-13
 - Ex – hourly chime to remind ourselves to pray against lust
 - 1 Cor 8:2-3
 - Takes our eyes off of ourselves
 - Then we are free to love others
- Guard your brother – 8:7-12
 - sarcasm
 - “You who have knowledge” = those who think that these truths excuse their behavior
 - “Those who are weak” = will is not strong
 - Your sin puts others at risk
 - Exodus 32
 - Principle: edify your brother, not yourself – 10:23-24
 - Dining in an idol’s temple – don’t do it
 - 10:25-26. Food from the market
 - 10:28-30. Food with a friend

Application

Ruthlessly destroy all idols. Anything that can divide your heart.

Renew your pursuit of God with a whole heart.

1 Cor 10:31