

## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:18-22

### GUESTS AT THE DEVIL'S TABLE

“Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants 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?”<sup>1</sup>

**D**o you sometimes wish that the Apostle Paul was present so you could ask him to clarify what he meant by some of the things he wrote? Some points of contention among Christians could be quickly cleared up if he were present. Though we don't have the Apostle present, we do have living within us the same Spirit who impelled the Apostle to write the letters that have been written. Moreover, that same Spirit of Christ works among His churches, guiding His people into truth as they submit themselves to Him and seek His guidance. If we do not understand what is written at some particular point, or if we fail to see the applicability of what is written, we need but ask, and God will give the answer we seek.

Ignoring the context of Paul's words in our text could lead to serious distortion of Scripture. A casual reading could lead an individual to assume that the Lord's Table is an actual sacrifice—a position advocated by some major Christian denominations. However, that would lead to serious error. Again, ignoring the context of the text could lead an individual to assume that Christians can worship God even while participating in devilish activities. Again, such a conclusion would be a presumptuous error.

In order to understand the importance of this portion of the Word, it will be helpful for us to refresh our memory of Paul's letter to the Church of God at Corinth, and especially with what he has written immediately preceding the text before us. Paul has been cautioning his readers that they cannot participate in evil without consequences. He uses the example of Israel in the wilderness, who though blessed with great and wondrous blessing nevertheless were not permitted to enter the Promised Land [**1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-5**].

He then issues a caution, reminding readers of the consequences of idolatry and immorality among the people of Israel. He reminded readers of the crafting of the golden calf [**EXODUS 32:1ff.**] and the consequences of that sin. Then, he wrote of the sin of grumbling against God by the people of God as recorded in **NUMBERS 21:4-9**. When the people complained, God sent venomous snakes among them as punishment, though He did provide a means for relief when they were bitten. In short, Paul warned the Corinthian believers against presuming against the Lord. He warned them that sin always has consequences, and however well intentioned an action may be, God nevertheless holds His people accountable.

The Apostle wrote these things because some Corinthian Christians were treating idolatry as a casual matter. Some, only recently delivered from the bondage of idolatry, were being drawn back toward that evil through the actions of others who imagined that their freedom gave them licence to do as they pleased without considering the impact of their actions on others who were more scrupulous about participating in the activities they had only recently shunned.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version** © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Join me in focusing on the truths Paul revealed to the Christians of Corinth nearly two millennia past. Our purpose is to discover the will of God given through Paul's instruction and to apply in our own lives what we discover. The passage is **1 CORINTHIANS 10:18-21**, and the subject under consideration is whether we can be guests at the devil's table.

**PARTICIPATION AS WORSHIP**—Paul's argument points up the necessary relationship between participation and worship. Participating in a religious ritual implies worship of the one behind the rite. Refresh your memory of the problem Paul was confronting among the Corinthians. Some Corinthian Christians had concluded that since they were free, they could participate in feasts honouring idols. However, in drawing this conclusion, they failed to consider the impact of their choice on the lives either of other Christians or even on those outside the Faith. It was a systemic problem running throughout the congregation as the people focused on their own comfort without thinking of the impact of their choice on others.

In the ancient world, meat was sold in the Agora—the marketplace. Meat cutters were members of a guild, which though having similarities to a modern union was actually a religious organisation. Those belonging to a particular guild would be expected to acknowledge the patron god or goddess of the guild. Thus, in the meat cutters guild, all the meat would be offered to the patron deity, though only a portion would remain on the altar. The meat that was not actually left before the deity (usually the better cuts) was sold in the Agora. Accordingly, those who ate of the meat were said actually to be dining with the deity to whom the meat was offered—that deity was considered a guest at any meal where the meat was served.

The key to understanding Paul's argument is provided by focusing on the word “participation” in verse sixteen and “participants” in verse eighteen. The root word implies fellowship. The word “partake” in verses seventeen and twenty-one is a different word which nevertheless conveys a similar meaning. When you partake of someone's table, you accept their hospitality and share their life, even if transiently.

To partake of a Jewish sacrifice in a holy place was an act of worship. By the same rationale, to eat food offered as part of a pagan sacrifice was an act of worship. Those who shared in the Jewish sacrifice made, at the least, a tacit admission that they were Jewish and that they shared common belief concerning God who was worshipped. Likewise, those who shared in pagan sacrifices were, of necessity, in communion with each other and were also in communion with the god worshipped (or in this instance, the demonical power behind the god). Participation in Christian ordinances points to communion with Christ; and participation in pagan ceremonies entails communion with demons.

Before exploring this issue further, I direct your attention again to Paul's argument. He is not conceding that the Greek or Roman gods were real—there was no Athena or Minerva, no Zeus or Jupiter, no Poseidon or Neptune. However, behind the concept of the gods were demonic powers who took advantage of culpable and gullible humans.

The Greeks and the Romans did not intend to worship demons; nevertheless, they did so. People in our world do not plan to serve demonic powers when they break God's laws while pursuing their own desires. However, those who reject God's rule over their lives serve Satan as surely as though they were bowing down before Him. Satan is identified in God's Word as the “god of this world” [see **2 CORINTHIANS 4:4**] and as “the ruler of this world” [e.g. **JOHN 12:31**]. The sole alternative to worshipping the True and Living God is to worship the god of this world. Although the gods of the Greeks and Romans had no existence, there were nevertheless behind them real, evil beings—the rulers of the darkness of this world.

Paul was confronting the Corinthians with the disconcerting knowledge that regardless of their intention, they were actually guests at the devil's table when they participated in a sacrificial feast at which meat dedicated to a pagan deity was offered. Though the Christians who shared in these meals would have undoubtedly argued that they did not intend to worship demons, they were nevertheless worshipping demons. The question was not what their intent might have been; the question was what they had done! Not their intention, but the implications and effect of their conduct were under apostolic scrutiny.

A person need not intend to burn himself when he places his hand in the fire; but he will burn his hand when he places it in the fire. Similarly, an individual need not intend polluting herself when she engages in questionable behaviour; but she will nevertheless pollute her soul through watching questionable shows or reading questionable literature.

The principle is forcefully applied to the life of Christians who share in religious acts with those who are not serving God. In heathen countries, professed Christians cannot join in religious rites with unbelievers and say that their actions were only demonstrating courtesy. As certainly as the Corinthians were dining with demons, so the professed Christian who participates in a pagan ritual is sharing with demonical powers and rendering worship to the god of this world.

Let me take this a step further to make a serious point that is neglected in this day. Baptists who hold to the Bible as the sole rule for faith and practise, who hold the Bible to be authoritative and true, cannot link arms with professed Christians who deny the infallibility of the Word and treat the Book as though it were inerrant without sharing in the fallen philosophy of those holding such truths. As one who believes the Bible to be God's Word—inerrant and infallible—I cannot participate at worship with those who deny the Word which God has given.

While pastoring a congregation nearby, I was approached by a group of women who wanted our church to host a women's day of prayer. I graciously declined the invitation. When the spokesman for the women's group protested that I was being bigoted, I firmly insisted that I would under no circumstances permit our congregation to either host the event or promote it.

There was grumbling from some women within the congregation I pastored; they felt that I had disgraced them in the eyes of the church community. In fact, at the next congregational meeting, two women presented a demand of the congregation to host the meeting. They were incensed that I had declined on behalf of the church. After one woman in particular had voiced her protests, I responded by reading from the literature circulated on behalf of the day of prayer that was planned. It revealed that the women were urged to form a prayer circle in order that participants could pray to "earth mother," confessing their sins against the earth. The literature continued by instructing participants in the use of prayer wheels and other pagan customs.

Following my rationale for refusing to participate, there was shocked silence. Then, one of the women responded by saying, "But, these are only guidelines. We never do those things." Nevertheless, I carefully pointed out that to participate—even to lend our name to venture, however casually, was to embrace the entire agenda. I suppose that our congregation was the only church in our community that failed to participate in that venture.

On another occasion, I was approached by a ministerial group to inquire whether our church would be participating in a service of Christian unity. When I inquired who would be participating in the event, I was informed that "all the churches in town" would be represented. Again, I graciously declined the offer only to be met once more by the rather puerile question, "Why not?" It is a common response designed to erode confidence because it is assumed that the one refusing to participate is merely bigoted, having no rationale for refusal.

I responded that I would not share an act of worship with a particular minister, whom I named by name. “She holds,” I stated, “in common with her denomination the conviction that a church should sanctify same sex marriage. She holds the Bible to be a compilation of ethical positions supported by various myths. She denies that Jesus is very God in human flesh. These reasons will do for a start.” My interlocutor agreed that I was correct in this assessment, and again asked why I would not simply attend and “say a prayer.”

I replied, “I cannot approve of her denial of the Faith on Thursday evening and then stand on Sunday morning to tell my people that Jesus Christ is God and that the Bible is His Word. I cannot tacitly approve sodomites as righteous on Thursday evening and condemn the behaviour as reprehensible on Sunday. My people would be confused and I would have denied the Faith.”

That man’s response was telling, for when I had forcefully stated my opposition, he said, “You are right. I agree with you, but if I took that stand my deacons would have my head.” Consequently, I made up my mind at that point that I would be reluctant even to join with that man in any act of worship as he had no convictions, holding rather a set of preferences.

The same principle applies to those evangelical Christians who agree to participate in religious observance with Roman Catholics. Catholics hold the Bible to be equal with tradition, rejecting it as the sole foundation for faith and practise. They hold Mary to be mediatrix between God and man; and however much they may protest, it is difficult to distinguish Mariolatry from idolatry. They see participation at the Mass as salvific. When one who worships the God of Heaven, in a bid to be congenial or courteous, kneels before the host at a Catholic service, or genuflects before the statuary situated in a Catholic edifice, or even in a cursory manner agrees that the Pope is infallible when speaking *ex cathedra*, that one shares in Catholicism.

Had I agreed to host the women’s day of prayer, I would have compelled my congregation to be participants together with others who were worshipping mother earth. Had I agreed to participate in the evening of prayer for Christian unity, I would have been in communion with people who deny the Bible and ridicule the Son of God as Saviour. Should I participate in a Catholic service, I am in agreement with them concerning Mary, concerning the Pope, concerning the Person of Christ the Lord. Whatever my intention may have been, at that moment I cease to be in communion with the Master and enter into communion with evil.

**SPIRITUAL SCHIZOPHRENIA** — “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.” To attempt to participate in worship of Jesus the Lord while serving wickedness is nothing less than spiritual schizophrenia. Paul does not allow the luxury of flitting between godliness and godlessness. The Corinthians were not permitted to become flippant about serving God and serving idols. Either they are devoted to the Lord, or they are devoted to someone else.

Notice in particular Paul’s strong language as he proscribes behaviour that had become acceptable among the Corinthian Christians. The Apostle does not say that participating in an idolatrous feast is incongruous for a Christian; he says that one **cannot** drink the Cup of the Lord and the cup of demons—that one **cannot** share at the table of demons and at the Table of the Lord. It is not so much that such efforts are unseemly or inconsistent; it is that such actions simply cannot be done—such duality is an impossibility.

In the account of Israel constructing the Golden Calf, we read that Aaron built an altar before the calf that he had made and announced, ‘Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.’ Then, the people “rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play” [EXODUS 32:5, 6].

In English, the translation seems rather innocuous. The statement is pedestrian, even commonplace. The original language could indicate that the people had a festival, worshipping without realising why they were partying, and that the celebration took on a different complexion following the food. According to Doctor W. C. Kaiser, the word translated “rose up to play” means “drunken immoral orgies and sexual play.” Some English versions reflect this understanding. For instance, Today’s English Version speaks of “an orgy of drinking and sex.”<sup>2</sup> The New Century Version says the people “got up and sinned sexually.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the word can have that connotation; however it is likely that the original readers did not understand this to be the meaning of what was written.

In the Old Testament, the word is used of Lot when he warned his sons-in-law and to them it appeared that he was “jesting” [see **GENESIS 19:14**]. The word is also used of Ishmael “laughing” in mockery of Isaac [see **GENESIS 21:9**]. The same word is likewise used of Isaac “laughing with” with his wife in a manner that revealed to Abimelech that they were not brother and sister [see **GENESIS 26:8**]. And the word is used by Potiphar’s wife to say that her husband brought this slave Joseph in to “laugh at” them [see **GENESIS 39:14**]. “The most that can be gathered from these uses is that it is playful teasing, serious mocking, or playful caresses. It might fit with wild orgies, but there is no indication of that in this passage, and the word does not mean it. The fact that they were festive and playing before an idol was sufficient.”<sup>4</sup>

The point that must be communicated is that merely eating in the presence of an idol, however well intentioned the activity may be, is spiritual schizophrenia. The very fact that Israel feasted before an idol meant that they were contaminated in the eyes of the Lord. At that point, they were no longer a holy people. Similarly, grumbling against God’s leadership provided through Moses was spiritual schizophrenia. When the people complained against the Lord and His leadership, they in effect defied Him by indicating that they knew what was best for themselves and that God did not have their best interests at heart. The point is that one cannot worship God and an idol; one cannot worship God and exalt one’s own desires.

In the text before us, Paul uses the ordinance of the Lord’s Table to advance his argument, contrasting this common act of worship with idol feasts at which some Corinthian Christians were participants. The central ceremony of Christian worship is more than mere words and actions; those who take part in these rites become actual partners. Likewise, those who share in non-Christian and pagan ceremonies become partners with those participating in those activities and with the powers directing the activity. One may be a partner with God; one may be a partner with demons. However, one cannot be a partner simultaneously with God and with demons.

The partnership of participation is two-fold. First, there is a partnership with others sharing in the activity. Thus, at the Lord’s Table we become partners with our fellow worshippers. If we are “in communion” with them, we believe alike concerning the things we are doing and the direction we are moving communally. For instance, all Christians share in the “fellowship of the Holy Spirit” [**2 CORINTHIANS 13:14**], a truth that unites us in the Faith.

Again, we become partners with the deity who is worshipped. If we are truly worshipping the Lord, then we become partners with Him. If, however, behind the activity there are cosmic powers and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places, then we have become partners with them in their nefarious work. So, we are responsible to be discerning.

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<sup>2</sup> **Today’s English Version: The Good News Translation** (American Bible Society, New York 1992)

<sup>3</sup> **The Everyday Bible: New Century Version** (Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN 2005)

<sup>4</sup> **The NET Bible First Edition** (Biblical Studies Press, 2006)

The food presented at the Lord's Table is sacred to the Lord—that is, it is devoted to His purpose and reserved to be distributed as He chooses. The food at an idol's table is sacred to that deity. The problem is not the food, but the different lords over the meals—demonic lords verse the Lord Jesus Christ. At the Lord's Table, those participating confess that they are devoted to Him whom they worship. Though many approach without thinking of what they are saying, at the table of an idol, participants make a similar declaration of devotion to the dark powers.

Paul's argument is apparent to "sensible people" [1 CORINTHIANS 10:15]. Members of a congregation are partners with the Lord and partners with one another in their worship at the Lord's Table. This is a partnership to which members testify because "there is one bread" and we "all partake of the one bread." Any sensible individual would conclude that the same truths apply whenever we enter into partnership with wickedness. Just as Achan exposed all Israel to defeat through one act of surrender to his own desires, so a Christian who exposes himself or herself to an idolatrous act is exposing the entire Christian community to demonic powers.

Paul's words banish any defence for religious pluralism—loyalty to the Lord and loyalty to demonic powers are mutually exclusive. In fact, contact with demonic forces provokes the Lord to jealousy and unleashes devastating judgement. That was the point of the review of Israel's judgements when they presumed against the Lord. It was a warning to the Corinthians, and it should serve as a warning to us who name His Name in this day. The apostolic charge issued to all Christians is to "flee idolatry" [1 CORINTHIANS 10:14]. David Prior is correct when he says, "There are dangers in presumptuousness and complacency, especially the danger of finding ourselves victims of the humiliating fall which inevitably follows all pride. But there is, if anything, even greater danger in compromise, because we smudge the issues and let in all kinds of spiritual counterfeits which confuse the truth as it is in Jesus, as well as being in obvious conflict with it."<sup>5</sup>

**TRUTHS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS** — On the first Sunday of each month, it is our custom to observe the Communion Meal. At that time, I usually provide an exposition of Scripture related to that ancient act of worship. Though the text chosen for this day did not directly address the conduct of the Meal, it did present vital truths necessary for those who would honour the Lord whom we worship. Therefore, in order to ensure that our worship is pleasing before Him, I ask you to consider several truths that have applicability to each of us.

The first truth that must be stressed is a reminder to each of us that **God is holy**. Because He is holy, those who worship Him must themselves be holy. Paul addresses this truth in verse twenty-two when he asks, "Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" The Lord chose to reveal Himself to the people of Israel as a jealous God [EXODUS 20:5]. His jealousy is related to His power and His holiness. He is to be revered as absolutely without equal. Because He is God, He will brook no rival to His devotion.

If I come into His presence to worship with a casual attitude, or if I attempt to live in order to gratify my desires while seeking the benefits of loving God, I am only deceiving myself. God will tolerate no rival, not even when desires within the heart of His own child rival for His affection. I fear God; and I fear that many of the professed people of God are flirting with disaster because they want it all—the comforts of this world and the promise of life with the Father throughout eternity. Most of contemporary Christendom seeks the here and the hereafter, thus only deceiving themselves.

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<sup>5</sup> David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians: Life in the Local Church* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 1985) 175

The Psalmist asks and answers a most vital question concerning suitability for worship.

“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not lift up his soul to what is false  
and does not swear deceitfully.”

[PSALM 24:3, 4]

Clean hands and a pure heart are necessary if I will please God. Of course, there can be no clean hands if I use them to gratify myself. Neither can there be a pure heart until Christ reigns over that heart. There is no possibility of being holy until I stand in the imputed righteousness of Christ Jesus the Lord. Simply saying that I feel alright fails to suffice for righteousness. Tragically, many professing Christians today opine that they do not feel badly about their lives, though they are not certain what would be required to be holy.

Saying that one is not a murderer while hating brother Christians disqualifies from righteousness. Contending that one is not an adulterer while watching salacious shows on television or viewing lascivious porn sites is meaningless. Vigorous singing and ecstatic dancing without recognising the presence of the Lord does not qualify as worship. Solemn music and a sense of awe do not necessarily mean that one has been in the presence of the Lord.

Another vital truth is that *idoltrous behaviour invites divine judgement*. Throughout the verses under consideration, Paul has cautioned Christians that idoltrous behaviour invites God's discipline. This should not be surprising for any of us as it is an axiom of the Faith from earliest days of God's people.

During the week, I encountered a passage that illustrates this point. In Second Kings, the writer states that Israel “went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them... “The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight” [2 KINGS 17:15b, 20].

The seventeenth chapter of Second Kings speaks of the conquest of Israel by Assyria. Reading that chapter, it becomes obvious that blessings, such as a strong economy, are not a reliable indicator of God's favour. Neither is military might, increasing life expectancy nor technological advancement indicative of God's favour on a nation. God's blessing is assured only for that nation that is righteous and godly. Assyria defeated Israel in spite of their blessings because Israel's theology was flawed. The people had sinned by embracing other gods.

One might ask what the nature of Israel's idoltrous theology was.

- It was adultrous; the people exchanged the God who had brought them out of Egypt for the deities of surrounding nations [2 KINGS 17:7, 8].
- It was second-rate; they worshipped gods whom Yahweh had defeated [2 KINGS 17:8].
- It was pervasive; every area of national life was affected [2 KINGS 17:9, 10].
- It was obstinate; they stubbornly worshipped idols in defiance of God's statutes, covenant and warnings [2 KINGS 17:14, 15],
- It was faithless; they did not believe in the Lord their God [2 KINGS 17:14].
- It was condemned; the Lord exiled them to Assyria [2 KINGS 17:20].

The Kairos Journal provides the following comments on this passage. They are worthy of serious consideration. "God's verdict on Israel was striking. He rejected them and orchestrated their defeat because they had become as worthless as the idols they worshipped. A nation that bows down to useless idols is itself useless in God's eyes.

"The Lord no longer has a covenant with any political nation. His covenant now is with His people, the Church. Nevertheless, God has promised to punish wickedness wherever it may be found. By worshipping other gods, entire nations may plunge themselves into perilous evil. The Bible's warning about idolatry, therefore, is not simply for the Church, but for the nation as well.

"Idolatry is not just a person's bowing down to a stone figurine. Idolatry has more to do with where one's trust lies. Economic indicators, stock prices, and mutual funds may become just as idolatrous as totem poles if people value them above God. The people of Israel genuflected before statues while modern man bows before things as fleeting as sensuality, fame, health, power, and money.

"The Church must strive to divert the nation's gaze from idols of destruction to God. Only the One, True God, as revealed in Scripture, is worthy of a people's worship. Call to any other god in the day of trial, and you'll only hear an echo."<sup>6</sup>

I fear that modern Christendom is infected with a debilitating virus of self-gratification. Most of us are more concerned with acquiring things than we are with equipping ourselves with spiritual character. Our personal comfort is of greater importance than obedience to God. The churches of our Lord are infested with unsaved people that are satisfied with the status quo and who are unwilling to risk their personal comfort to serve the True and Living God. Therefore, the shepherds resist confronting sin and holding members accountable before the Lord.

Many, perhaps even most, professing Christians among contemporary churches are afflicted with spiritual schizophrenia. As I survey the contemporary religious scene, I see astonishing numbers of professing Christians more concerned with how they are seen by their peers in the world than they are with how they are seen by God. What others may think is of greater importance to most modern Christians than what God may think. This is evident from the concessions we make to the world, from the unwillingness to confront the evil of the world, from the fact that we have been co-opted by the world's agenda so that we no longer know what is good and what is evil.

Many years ago, the Vance Havner incisively wrote, "Our world is fast becoming a madhouse and the inmates are trying to run the asylum. It is a strange time when the patients are writing the prescriptions. The students are threatening to run the schools, the children to manage the homes, and church members—not the Holy Spirit—to direct the churches. Such lawlessness always brings a dictator and the last of that line will be the Antichrist, now in the offing awaiting his cue." His words are disconcertingly prescient in light of contemporary trends.

If we participate in the wickedness of the world, we must anticipate divine judgement. At the Lord's Table, we declare that we are participants with the Lord in His great work. We must know that we invite His judgement as we participate at His Table. Moreover, having participated at the Lord's Table, we cannot casually return to the world to conduct ourselves as we wish without inviting His scrutiny. If we imbibe of the world's fallen philosophy, if we lend our influence to the wickedness of the world, we must know that God will hold us accountable.

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<sup>6</sup> "A Weak-Kneed Nation," Kairos Journal  
(<http://www.kairosjournal.org/Document.aspx?QuadrantID=1&CategoryID=6&TopicID=23&DocumentID=6515&L=1>), accessed 4 October, 2008



If I live as though my feelings are the final arbiter of my actions, and then attempt to come to the Lord's Table, I have been dining with demons and I cannot worship God. If I follow my own agenda because it is comfortable, rejecting the will of God because it does not make me comfortable, though I go through the motions of observing the Communion Meal I cannot worship at the Lord's Table. If I persist in accommodating evil, uniting with religious error for the sake of feeling good that all religions are united, I cannot worship God.

When Paul wrote that "Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself," he appended the fact that some within the Corinthians congregation had already been judged. "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world" [1 CORINTHIANS 11:29-32]. I wonder if some Christians whom we know have been judged, and we have chosen to ignore what we observe. I wonder if we are challenging the Lord by attempting to live in two worlds. The Apostle would confront us with the fact that this is impossible.

The final call of the message is for God's people to be holy because our God is holy. God's call is presented through His Apostle, Peter. "Preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" [1 PETER 1:13-23]. Amen.