



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Text 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

1 Corinthians

“Dining with Demons”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you, Mark. We are in 1 Corinthians this morning. We’re continuing our studies in this great book, and we are in chapter 10, and we’re going to look at verses 14 through 22.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? *No*, but *I say* that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in 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. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?” May God bless this reading of His Word. Let’s bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, we give You thanks for this day, this Lord’s day. It’s a beautiful day. The weather is so nice, but even if it were stormy, it would be a glorious day because it’s Your day and it’s a day when we as Your people come together in fellowship. And as we so often say, Christian fellowship is not simply visiting and catching up on the week with our friends. Christian

fellowship is fellowship around Your Word. It is studying it together. It is discussing the things of God. It is worshiping together. And that is what we have the opportunity to do this morning, to worship You, to learn of You, to apply our minds to the things above rather than the things below.

And so, Lord, we pray that You’d help us to do that, that You would help us to detach our thoughts from the daily things of this life and to focus upon You, to focus upon this text of Scripture and learn from it. And what an amazing thing it is that we can learn from it, a passage written nearly 2,000 years ago, to a people long gone in a culture that’s long gone, dealing with things like temples and idols, and yet a text that is equally relevant for us in this day. And the apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Spirit of God was writing to more people than he even knew, to generations far down the line, farther down the line than he knew, writing to us as much as he was writing to those original Corinthians.

And so this text is as much for us as for them. It’s relevant today. That is a testimony to the veracity of Your Word. That’s a testimony to the inspiration of Scripture, a testimony to the supernatural character of this book, that 2,000 years later, it speaks just as loudly and clearly and pointedly as it did in that day. Give us ears to hear. Help us to understand these things and how they apply to us, because they certainly do. Teach us and build us up in the faith. Help us to learn more about You. Take the warnings that are here and apply them to our circumstances. So bless us spiritually, but Lord, we also pray for material blessing, as well. We are both spiritual and material and the material so often affects the spiritual. If we’re sick, it affects our attitude. It affects our walk with You. If we’re under pressure, it affects our spiritual condition. If we’re grieving, it affects us.

And Father, we come under all of these experiences. We become weighed down with the cares of life. I pray for those who are in particular difficulty, those who are sick. We pray for their healing. We pray for recovery for those who have gone through surgery, those who have physical setbacks of one kind or another. Give them health, Lord, if it please You, and give them encouragement, certainly. May the Spirit of God minister to them in their need.

And I pray for those that are unemployed and some who are having interviews this week. I pray that You’d bless them and open doors of opportunity for them, and encourage them in the meantime, let them know that You’re present with them at all times, even through the difficulties.

That’s certainly where You’re present with them, as they pass through the valley of the shadow of death, You’re there. Before them, beside them, in front of them. You’re with all of us. And when we are on the high sunny plains of life, You’re there with us. You give us everything and You give us what we need, even trials. So help those who are going through difficulties to rest in the comfort of knowing that You’re with them and that this is all part of Your plan for their life, and You will certainly bring them through it. We pray for those that are grieving, and we thank You, Father, that we have hope in Christ and have the knowledge that You’re with us now, and we pray that You would teach us and build us up in the faith, and bless us as we continue with our worship and study together. And we pray these things in Christ’s name, Amen.

Abraham was a pilgrim, a believer among unbelievers. One day he settled in the land of the Philistines and he said, “Surely there is no fear of the Lord in this place.” That made him fear because people who don’t fear God don’t respect His law. They are a law to themselves and a danger to others. No fear of the Lord in this place. That reminds me of an observation A.W. Tozer made in one of his books that “no people rises above its religion, and no religion is greater than its idea of God.” The way people think about God affects their behavior. And what is true of people and nations is true of churches, as well. No church will rise above its idea of God. Have you ever been in the church where you thought, “There is no fear of the Lord in this place”?

Well, the church of Corinth was an example of that. It was a good church, don’t misunderstand me, and there were earnest believers in that church. But there were some who thought they were strong, but were weak on the fear of God. Paul indicates that in verse 22 of our passage, where he asks the Corinthians, “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?” The answer, of course, is no. We’re not stronger than God. But the Corinthians were acting as though they were by being careless toward temptation. And that’s symptomatic. It is a symptom of a deeper problem, and that is that they don’t fear God and so they’re casual about sin, which results in committing sin and then coming under the discipline of God, which can be very hard. That’s what Paul was warning the Corinthians of with that question. If we think that we can be careless in our behavior and escape God’s displeasure, we will find that we cannot.

Well, what were they doing that prompted Paul’s warning here? They were flirting with idolatry, of all things. They were dining out at pagan temples and eating food offered to idols. Now, Paul has told them that they were free to do that. In verse 25 of this chapter, he will repeat that. They were free to go to a pagan temple, but they were never free to participate in pagan worship. Even going to such places might not be wise for some people, probably is not wise for most people. As Paul wrote in chapter 6, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable.” We need to live careful lives and do what is profitable. We need to think about what is profitable? And when I say “profitable,” and when Paul speaks of what’s profitable, he’s speaking about eternally profitable. What will last forever. And that’s what Paul is telling the Corinthians here in our text, 1 Corinthians 10:14-22. They were to do what was profitable. And that doesn’t involve idolatry. They were to avoid that. That’s what he warns against.

Paul was inflexibly opposed to every form of idolatry, and he begins by giving the only Christian response to it in verse 14. “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.” That word “therefore” is not the normal word for “therefore.” This is an unusual word which emphasizes a close logical connection between what Paul has said and what he will say. Now, every “therefore” indicates a connection, but this indicates a very close connection with what he has just said. And what he has said is that Israel’s privileges didn’t protect them from idolatry, and sin, and sin’s consequences, and it won’t protect us, either. Remember, he’s given a whole series of illustrations of Israel after the exodus in the wilderness wandering, and what happened to them when they were complaining and their unbelief and what resulted. God judged them. And the “therefore” indicates that he will deal with us, too. He will discipline us, as well.

Therefore, he says, in light of everything that I just told you and everything that you have seen in Israel, don’t dally with idolatry. Don’t hang around it. Flee. There’s an urgency here. He doesn’t say, “Walk away from it.” But run as fast as you can. In fact, he gives the command in the present tense, which signifies constant or habitual practice. Do this all the time. Always be rejecting it. It’s all a myth, of course, idolatry. Pagan pantheons were nothing. They didn’t exist except in the minds of men. They were figments of man’s imagination. That’s the irony of idolatry. Men invented gods and then

worshiped their own fantasies. But they were real in their minds. They were real in the minds of men and the ideas had a powerful hold on the culture of that time, on the minds of men, and it was an influence for evil. What they invented were deities that behaved like men, and the worst of men. The gods are like us and they behaved badly. Zeus seduced young women. He and the other gods did vile and cruel things. So did their worshipers.

What Tozer said is true. No religion is greater than its idea of God, and the way people think about God or their gods affects their behavior. If the Corinthians took a casual attitude toward idolatry, they would be affected by it. Paul is saying that is a certainty. So they were not to play with it. Don’t flirt with idolatry, he was saying. Don’t skate around the edges of it. Don’t see how close you can get to it without getting burned. Flee it. And that is excellent counsel for all temptation. Don’t entertain it in any way. Don’t check out that adult channel on the television when you’re in a hotel in some faraway town on business. Don’t take a chance. Flee it. But the subject here is religious. It’s spiritual. It’s about idolatry. Now today, we don’t worry about the very things that Paul is correcting here. We don’t worry about visiting the temples of Jupiter or Mars.

Christianity swept away the ancient gods, but we still have idols. What might that be for us? I think we can answer that by saying whatever is most important to you, whatever has first place in your life is what you worship. If that’s not God, then it’s an idol. And that can be anything. It can be business. It can be entertainment. It can be family. It can be a philosophy. It can be anything. It can be good things that we allow to have priority and preference in our lives. It’s never wise to let anything have preference to God in our lives. So in verse 15, Paul appeals to the Corinthians on the basis of wisdom. “I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.” The Corinthians valued wisdom. You remember that from the early chapters of this book. They put a high value on wisdom. A lot of it was worldly wisdom, but they knew that word. They valued wisdom. So he is saying, “As sensible men, do the sensible thing.”

Now, often the Corinthians were too clever by half, as the British put it. They were a little too smart for their own good, which is to say they really weren’t clever or wise at all. But they did know, as I said, the value of wisdom. That was true and they were believers. They had the Holy Spirit. And Paul appeals to them on that basis. “Be wise,”

he is saying. “Follow my reasoning and it will make sense.” And that’s good counsel for us. Believe the Bible. What Paul is saying to them, his words to them are the Word of God. They are inspired of God. It’s revelation. And so we can take that principle that he gives to them here: be sensible, be wise; and apply it to all of the Word of God. The Bible makes sense and it makes people wise.

In the book *Lone Star*, which is a history of the state of Texas, T.R. Fehrenbach gives a brief account of the influence the King James version of the Bible had on Texas in the mid 19th century. Now the people living in Texas at that time were not sophisticated. Many of them were people who had come from the east, from the southeast. They left a very hard life for a very hard life in Texas. They were scratching out a living. Life was very, very simple, and education was very simple. But the Bible was taught in all the schools. The King James version was fundamental to Texas culture. As a result, he wrote, “Visitors were often surprised to find Texans who had no apparent cultivation able to strip vanities and euphoric philosophies from better educated men.”

Scriptures make us wise. The Bible makes us wiser than the wise. And Paul was assuring the Corinthians that if they followed his reasoning, they would be wise. A wise person will recognize that the things we do count. They have meaning. Nothing that you and I do is inconsequential. Everything has consequences, and Paul proves that now in regard to participating in pagan practices. And he does that in a very interesting way. He does that by comparing the Lord’s supper with pagan dinners. Just as there is fellowship with Christ at the Lord’s supper, so there is fellowship with false gods at the shrines.

Now, there are no pagan deities. They are not real. The gods are not real. But there is something there that is real, something spiritual. There are real powers involved in heathen worship and they are demonic. I’ve never seen a demon. I don’t guess you can see demons. I, to the best of my knowledge, have never been in contact with someone who has a demon, and to read this seems to be so counter to the world in which we live today which is governed by a belief in naturalism, a belief in materialism. That’s the thinking of the elites and I think the governing spirit of our age is one of materialism. Seeing is believing. If you don’t see it, there’s no reason to believe in it. This is a material universe and that’s it.

And yet, we read in the Scriptures that there’s a whole world that’s invisible to us. There is an unseen world. There is demonic activity going on. Paul talks about it in Ephesians 6. We find we read about that in the Old and the New Testaments. This is not just the expression of a first century mind that’s governed by the culture of that day. This is inspired literature. This is the Word of God. This is revelation and we learn here that there’s more than meets the eye to the world in which we live. There is a spiritual realm and a demonic realm, and those who participate in temple feasts and rituals are not involved in nothing. There is something there. There is a spiritual reality there. They are dining with demons. That’s the warning here.

So Paul’s earlier instruction that was against these Corinthians going to pagan temples because that might influence the weaker brother and injure the weaker brother is now a warning against them going there because it would injure themselves. But Paul begins his warning by showing how worship at the Lord’s table is significant. It involves fellowship with Christ when we take the bread and the wine. He asks in verse 16, “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ?” And the answer to that, of course, is yes. And then he asks the same thing about the bread. Isn’t it “a sharing in the body of Christ?” And again, the answer is yes. From this, he’ll make the point that just as partaking of the Lord’s supper is communion with Christ, so too participating in a pagan supper is communion with demons.

But in speaking of the Lord’s supper, he gives us valuable information about it. He will develop this much more fully in chapter 11. But right here, he shows us how important it is for us to come to the Lord’s table, to take the Lord’s supper every week. He speaks of the wine first and refers to it as the “cup of blessing,” because that was the name that was given to the third of the four cups of wine that were drunk at the passover meal. When it was poured, a blessing was given. And at the last passover, passover that our Lord celebrated with His disciplines the night of his betrayal, the gospels record how the Lord gave thanks before he gave the cup to the disciples.

And then was when the passover passed over into the Lord’s supper and it became a permanent ordinance of the church and a reminder that Christ is our passover. He’s speaking of the cup with a deliberate allusion to the passover meal so that he will bring to

their mind, to our minds, all that the passover represented. The passover lamb that was eaten and represented that which was sacrificed in the place of the firstborn child in Egypt. It is a picture of someone else. It is a picture of the deliverer to come. It’s a picture of Christ, who is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. He’s the sacrifice who delivers us from slavery, slavery to sin, just as the passover was Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

And Paul is recalling all of that and reminding the Corinthians of the connection between the passover and Lord’s supper with the Jewish reference here to this cup of blessing, this third cup of the passover meal. When we drink it, when we drink the cup in the Lord’s supper, we are expressing our faith in Christ as our God and savior and show that we share in all of the benefits that that cup symbolizes. The benefits of forgiveness. We have eternal forgiveness from sin, from every sin, all sin, for the rest of our lives, past, present, and future. That’s symbolized here. We have justification. We are declared righteous in the sight of God. That’s what that cup symbolizes.

And so when we take it, we are signifying that we share in everything that that cup signifies. Recalling all of this at the Lord’s supper has a sanctifying influence on our minds and on our behavior. It gives us a proper perspective on life. That’s how we begin the week. That’s why this is so vital for us to be here taking the Lord’s supper, remembering what God has done for us, who Christ is, what He has accomplished for us, what He will yet accomplish for us. It puts life in perspective. It’s a good way, an important way, a necessary way to begin the week.

We share in eternal, infinite blessings that he obtained for us at the cross. We also are expressing our unity with the church, unity with one another. That’s what Paul says in verse 17. “Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.” When we take the bread at the Lord’s supper, we are all eating from the same loaf, from one bread, which indicates our unity with one another. Just as there is one bread, there is one body of Christ. Whenever people worship, they identify themselves with the object of worship and bind themselves to the worshipers.

And Paul illustrates that next in verse 18 from Israel’s worship at the temple. He is describing Israel according to the flesh. That’s literally what he says in the Greek text

when he writes, “Look at the nation Israel.” That literally is “Israel according to the flesh.” So he’s describing here unbelieving Jews who offer and eat sacrifices. And he says they share in the altar. They join themselves to the altar and they express their confidence in the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.

Wherever people worship, they express their confidence in the object of worship. When we partake of the bread and the wine at the Lord’s supper, we show that we belong to Christ. Likewise, those who partake pagan worship, they signify that they belong to the pagan deities. Now by this point, sensible Corinthians would have followed Paul’s logic. But they may also have noticed what they might consider a contradiction in his earlier teaching. After all, back in chapter 8, he said “there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.” So they might be wondering how could they be partaking of false gods when false gods don’t exist?

Now, Paul anticipated that question and in verse 19, he clears it up. “What do I mean then?” He asks. “That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? *No*, but *I say* that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.” Moses said the same thing in Deuteronomy 32:17, that those who sacrifice to idols are sacrificing to demons. Moses knew there were no other gods but God. He knew that the gods of the Gentiles were figments of their imagination, but there was something behind those idols that was very real, and that’s the demons.

Milton captured that in the early verses of *Paradise Lost*, that very long poem that he wrote. At the very beginning, he speaks of the angels that fell with Lucifer, and he gives them the names of the pagan deities, Chimosh, Baal, Osiris, Saturn, and many others. He understood that there is a reality to those idols. There’s a spiritual reality. They’re all representing the demons. And then he recounts the evil associated with them. He wrote, “Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood of human sacrifice and parents’ tears.” Now that’s expressing a great reality, too. All of the sorrow that those idols brought upon the human race. So the fact that idols are nothing but blocks of wood and stone doesn’t mean that they are safe. They’re certainly not safe.

They’re nothing. An idol is nothing. But something is there, and it is dangerous, and it is deceitful. Worshiping false gods is, first of all, robbing the true God of his glory. That is theft. But what is particularly monstrous about it is it’s giving glory to Satan, who is the lord of the demons. I don’t think the heathen intended to do that at all. But as Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan “has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they” give him worship when it should go to God. They think they’re worshiping a god. They’re really worshiping Satan.

So Paul, as he says here, warns against all of that. All of these people, when they go to the temples and shrines and they eat the food offered to idols and engage in the rituals associated with it are really dining with devils. They become sharers or partners with demons. And that’s true of Christians who go to those places and think that what they’re doing is innocuous, that it’s innocent because an idol is nothing. Now that’s reckless. That’s what Paul is saying. It’s reckless. The pagans don’t intend to worship demons, but they do.

And the Corinthians would be doing that, as well, if they participated in those feasts. There are unseen powers at work there. And they can exert a strong influence on the minds of people. So it’s foolish for a person to put himself or herself in the path or under the influence of such things, such beings. Just as the Lord’s supper has a sanctifying, cleansing, fortifying influence on the believer, so too idolatry has a subversive influence on the worshiper. So no matter how resolved a Christian might be not to be carried away if he or she should be a guest at one of these places, he might find that the atmosphere there was more potent than he anticipated. British scholar F.F. Bruce wrote, “in the cool light of the next morning, he might well realize that he had joined in words or practices totally at variance with his Christian profession.”

Self-confidence can be a dangerous thing. Self-confidence is a good thing, in many ways, but self-confidence can become over confidence. That’s what Paul was warning about earlier in verse 12 when he wrote, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.” Generally, it’s true that where we go matters. The places we frequent matter. The people we associate with matter.

Augustine tells the story of his friend **Alepias**, who went to Rome to study law. Alepias was a moral young man. He was a man who had very strong scruples. But one day he happened to meet some friends along the street who forced him in a friendly way to go to the arena and watch the gladiators. He was appalled. That was a terrible thing to do. He resisted. He protested. But they dragged him in. So they go to their place in the arena and he says, “You can get me here, but you can’t make me watch it.” So he covered his eyes. But he didn’t cover his ears. And when a man fell in combat and a roar went up from the crowd, he looked. And he became excited. He became intoxicated by the blood. It took fire. Augustine said he became a true comrade of those who brought him there. In fact, he began to return to the arena to watch the gladiators, and he even began to drag people along with him.

He eventually repented, but it shows the danger of being in the wrong place and what it can do to a testimony, and what it can do to a person’s character. The best intentions are overcome by the circumstances. We are not strong in ourselves. We need to know that about ourselves. Abraham knew it about himself. He said, I’m just dust and ashes. So are we, all of us. That’s human nature. We need to avoid places of temptation. We need to run from them. Places of moral temptation and places of spiritual temptation, and it’s really the spiritual here that Paul is most concerned with. With many Corinthians, especially the so-called strong Corinthians, the ones who had the knowledge, the so-called mature of the church, this fall would happen on the pretext of Christian liberty. They understood their liberty. They knew what they could do, and they would carelessly take advantage of it. Paul says they are not at liberty to do just anything and they’re not at liberty to participate in false worship.

Verse 21, “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.” The two cannot mix, cannot mix any more than oil can mix with water. They cannot mix any more than light can mix with darkness. They’re mutually exclusive. We can’t dine with the Lord and dine with the devil. We can’t compromise our faith. Christianity is exclusive. Christ is “the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Him.” He said that. Those are His words. John 14:6.

And we live in a day where that’s under attack. I don't know if you listened to Dr. Johnson this morning. I caught the end of his sermon as I was driving to church for the early service. And he made that point. He’s speaking on 1 Corinthians. He’s going through the early chapters of it, and the importance of the cross, that’s the banner under which we live and minister, the cross of Christ. And that is under attack. In fact, as he pointed out, you can’t miss the fact that there is a rising tide of opposition to Christianity in our day. And he said that, what, 10, 15 years ago.

It’s no better today. As he pointed out, it’s illegal in our schools to talk about these things. We can talk about certain Christian things, but we cannot speak of the exclusivity of the cross, the only way of salvation. But that’s what Christ says. That’s the gospel and every Christian recognizes that. But when Christians visit temples in Corinth and participate in their rituals, they become partners with pagans and, in that way, inadvertently, but in that way, they affirm that that worship is true by their example. And when Christians visit a church where there is no fear of the Lord in that place, and they come dangerously close to joining with those who are there, becoming one with them, binding themselves with them, and affirming error and even a false gospel.

Now, we are to be loving toward the unbeliever. We are to be loving to the Jews and the Muslims, and to people who claim to be Christians but who believe in a gospel of works, of a works salvation and deny grace. We should be kind to everyone. I don’t think we should be a caustic, critical, censorious kind of people. We need to be a loving people. But we cannot be accepting of their ideas of God or a false way to God. We cannot accept as genuine Christianity anything that denies that the one God is a trinity. There is one God who exists in three persons, and the second person, the Son of God, is the Savior, the only mediator between God and man. That is not my statement. That’s not my theology. That is Paul’s theology. That is 1 Timothy 2:5. We can’t compromise that.

Now compromise does happen, and this takes us back to the beginning of the lesson. But it happens as a result of carelessness, or indifference, or shallowness. The way we think about God, or don’t think about Him, and oftentimes that’s the problem, isn’t it? We just don’t think that much about Him. We don’t set our minds on the things above. We keep them on the things below. But whether we think about God a little or

think in an improper way, the way we think about Him affects our life. It affects our behavior. It affects our loyalty to Him and to the truth.

So a casual attitude toward sin betrays a casual attitude toward God it betrays a lack of fear. And in verse 22, Paul asks two questions that indicate that the Corinthians, at least many of them, some of them, lacked Godly fear. “Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?” Of course we’re not stronger than God. But their easygoing attitude about their spiritual lives and their lack of loyalty to God showed they thought they could get away with it. It showed a lack of fear and a superficial knowledge of God. He is a jealous God who does not tolerate rivals any more than a husband or wife would tolerate a rival. Consider Hosea, a great picture of that. And what we see there is God is long suffering. He is patient towards his erring people. But he requires truth and the truth is He is the only God and He will discipline those who compromise that fact. Believing that is the fear of God.

And the fear of God is not some cringing fear of an impersonal deity. It involves love and trust for the God we know personally and whom we trust completely. But neither is the fear of God only reverence for Him. It involves an awareness of the consequences of sin. It is a genuine fear of His displeasure, and the consequences of it. Because the consequences are always right and fair, but they can be harsh. Those who love God fear God. They recognize that He is God, and that He is above all things, and that we are creatures, and we owe Him our obedience. So those who fear God seek to obey Him. They live to glorify Him. And they don’t do that simply because it is required of them. It is required of us. Obedience is required of us. But our motivation for obedience is not, “Well, I have to do this. It’s required, therefore I’ll do it.” It’s chiefly because they want to please Him. We want to please Him because we love Him. The one who has done everything for us. God loves us. What a thought that is.

In fact, I cannot plumb the depths of that simple statement that God loves us. Others may not. People may reject us. He never will. The God of the universe will never reject us. He loves us with an eternal, infinite, and unshakable love. He has saved us. Paul marveled at that. A magnificent statement that he makes in Romans 8:32 expresses his amazement over the unlimited care that God has for us. He says, “He who did not

spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” Because He did the greatest thing for us when we were His enemies, giving us His Son, sacrificing Christ for us, He’ll do everything for us now that we’re His friends, now that we’re His children. He won’t withhold any good thing from us. He never does. He never neglects us in any way. Everything that comes into our lives as His children is for our good.

So why would we substitute anything for Him? We do that, though. That’s always been a problem with God’s people. We saw it with Israel. It’s the same with us. John ends his first epistle, he ends chapter 5 with the words, “Little children, guard yourselves from idols.” It’s the last thing he has to say to them. And that’s for us, as well. We need to do that. Guard ourselves from idols. We need to fear God. When people come to this church, they should sense from our behavior toward one another and in our worship and our attention to God that we fear Him.

That means that we love Him and we’re loyal to Him above all things. It means that we love what He loves. We love His Word. We love His people. It means we exhibit Him in our lives, that when people come here, they should see reflected in our behavior, in our attitude, the character of God, the character of the person of Jesus Christ. Visitors should sense surely there is a fear of the Lord in this place.

And that means at least in part that we’re friendly to them, that we’re friendly to one another. That when we look down the aisle and we see someone that we don’t know, that we don’t look the other way to someone we do know and gravitate toward them. That we express the character of God and we reach out to others, and we’re a friendly people. There’s nothing wrong with shaking hands every once in awhile and introducing ourselves to people, rather than staying to ourselves and giving the impression that we’re a cold people. I don’t think we are. I know so many of you. I’ve been here a long time. I know the warmth of this place, but we need to express that to people. That’s part of living out the life of God among ourselves and towards others, and that’s a consequence of the fear of God, the love of God, trusting in Him.

So may God give us the grace to be that. May He change us and give us a greater knowledge of Himself and a greater love for Him who loves us. And if you don’t know

Him, if you’ve not believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, may God change you and give you a knowledge of your lost condition and a desire for the remedy, and the remedy is Jesus Christ. As I said earlier, I say again, as He Himself said, He’s the only way to God. He’s the only Savior of the world. So come to Him. Believe in Him. Trust in Him. That’s all you must do to have eternal life. You don’t earn it by your works or your deeds. You don’t earn it by coming to Believers Chapel or any church. You don’t earn it. You receive it. You receive it through faith alone by God’s grace. May God help you to look to Him and trust in Him and help all of us, by His grace, to serve Him faithfully. Let’s pray.

Father, we do thank You for your goodness to us. We thank You for Your love for us. We come to a text like this and we must to some degree, all of us, must feel some conviction because this world in which we live is still full of idols. Not the same kind of idols, but the other things that capture our attention that have priority in our thoughts and in our lives. And nothing should have priority to you. So, Father, draw us close to yourself. Convict us and give us a desire to know You better and serve You faithfully. We can do that only by Your grace, and it’s that grace that saved us in the first place. And we give You praise and thanks for it, for your Son, who died for us. And it’s in His name we pray, Amen.