

1 Corinthians 10:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Analysis

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils—This verse provides Paul's theological bombshell. While idols themselves are nothing (v. 19), pagan sacrifices are not offered into a spiritual vacuum—they're offered **to devils** (daimoniois, δαιμονίοις, "demons"). Paul likely alludes to Deuteronomy 32:17 (LXX): "They sacrificed to demons, not to God."

Daimonia in Greek culture could mean divine beings or spirits; in biblical usage, they're fallen angels who oppose God and deceive humanity. Pagan worship, however sincere, serves demons who masquerade as gods. This doesn't validate polytheism—there's still only one true God—but it recognizes that demonic powers exploit human religious instincts, receiving worship intended for deity.

Paul's urgent concern: **I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils** (ou thelō hymas koinōnous tōn daimoniōn ginesthai, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς κοινωνοῦς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι). The same word koinōnia used for communion with Christ (v. 16) appears here—to eat at idol tables is to enter fellowship with demons. This isn't mere social impropriety; it's spiritual adultery, aligning with God's enemies. Paul's pastoral heart breaks at the prospect of beloved Christians unwittingly partnering with hell.

Historical Context

Ancient temples weren't mere cultural centers—they were sites of spiritual transactions. Sacrifices, prayers, and rituals invoked spiritual powers. While participants believed they honored Zeus or Aphrodite, Paul reveals the reality: demons received the worship. Modern parallels include any religious system denying Christ's exclusive lordship—however culturally sophisticated, it ultimately serves demonic deception. Paul warns Christians to recognize and flee such spiritual danger.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What modern religious or spiritual practices might seem culturally neutral but actually involve fellowship with demons?
2. How can you recognize when cultural engagement crosses into spiritual compromise that aligns you with God's enemies?
3. Why is "fellowship with demons" such a serious concern if demons are defeated foes under Christ's authority?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλ' ὅτι ἀ θύει τά ἔθνη, δαιμονίων
But I say that the things which sacrifice G3588 the Gentiles to devils
G235 G3754 G3739 G2380 G1484 G1140

θύει καὶ οὐ θεῷ οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν
sacrifice and not to God not I would and that ye fellowship G3588
G2380 G2532 G3756 G2316 G3756 G2309 G1161 G5209 G2844

δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι
to devils should have
G1140 G1096

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 9:20 (Evil): And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

2 Corinthians 4:4 (References God): In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

2 Chronicles 11:15 (Evil): And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.

Leviticus 17:7 (Sacrifice): And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.