

Get a Rhythm: Communion, Culture, and Co-Mission (pt. 1)

1 Corinthians 10:14–22 | 10.16.2016 | Body Life @OBC

In seminary I learned many things . . . ranging from Ancient Creeds to Greek participles.

My life will ever be marked by those doctrinal studies.

But those years also impacted me in ways far beyond theology.

One example: it was also in seminary where I learned to enjoy the music of Johnny Cash

Before seminary . . . I had never listened to the man in black.

But because of a few teachers . . . you can now find him in my play list.

As I was studying our passage, one song came to mind.

It may not be one of his most famous; it may even be questionable w/ regards to race: One music critic calls her readers to decide if it is racist or race appreciating. ([p. 92](#))

That being acknowledged, “**Get Rhythm**” shows a sense of optimism thru the eyes of a shoeshine boy whose rhythmic labors display a heart filled with hope and joy.

Cash sings Little shoeshine boy never get slowed down
But he's got the dirtiest job in town
Bendin' low at the peoples' feet
On the windy corner of a dirty street
Well, I asked him while he shined my shoes
How'd he keep from gettin' the blues
He grinned as he raised his little head
Popped a shoeshine rag and then he said.

Hey, get rhythm when you get the blues
C'mon get rhythm, when you get the blues
A jumpy rhythm makes you feel so fine
It'll shake all the troubles from your worried mind,
Get rhythm, . . . when you get the blues.

If you are a non-Christian today . . . this is the best you can do . . . Find a catchy tune and get a rhythm that will pull you though . . .

If you are Christian . . . you have a sure hope . . . IN the Son of God whose resurrection from the dead promises you eternal life.

But what how does that future hope . . . impact your daily life?

Do your daily rhythms find their meter in the Lord's Resurrection?

How does communion w/ God . . . inform your daily commute / weekly commitments

Here is where our passage meets us today . . . and challenges to get a rhythm!

READ 1 Corinthians 10:14 – 22

G.K. Beale has said . . . **What you revere you resemble, either for ruin or for restoration**

In his book, **We Become What We Worship**, he explains what he means (284):

God has made all people to reflect, to be imaging beings. People will always reflect something, whether it be God's character or some feature of the world. If people are committed to God, they will become like him; if they are committed to something other than God, they will become like that thing, always spiritually inanimate and empty like the lifeless and vain aspect of creation to which they have committed themselves. . . . Israel resembled what they revered, which was an expression of [judgment] for their idolatry and led to their spiritual ruination. . . . And the same is true with people today.

Have you seen this ??

It is a wonderful truth . . . to be an image-bearer is not a curse but blessing.

Yet . . . that presumes our affections are set on God and holy, loving truth.

Tragically . . . we've been born into a world with competing gods and countless temples

By nature – we worship the wrong thing . . . and seek the wrong places.

Instead of pure & simple devotion to Christ alone . . . we devote ourselves to some other god.

This is what the Bible calls idolatry.

And as we've seen in 1 Corinthians . . .

. . . this isn't just a threat to those outside Christ . . .

. . . it is also true for those in Christ.

This is part of what it means in 10:13 – **'no temptation has overtaken you . . . '**

This is not the challenge of a few afflicted souls . . . it is everyone's condition.

Some IDOLS might be material addictions – drunkenness, sexual immoral., gambling, hoarding

Others are gifts which earn praise – career, family, money, character, service, bodily strength, mental acuity, on and on . . .

Some idols we hate . . . and YET LOVE . . .

Others we love . . . until they leave us empty and we hate them.

But all of them are temptations that threaten our souls!

Here's the point . . . as long as we inhabit this fallen world we will possess idolatrous hearts and bodies that crave things that God forbids.

Knowing that we need practical, powerful ways to fight idolatry.

We need to find (from God) rhythms of life that reinforce our redemption.

In **1 Cor 10:1–13** Paul turned to the OT to provide a holy incentive to flee idols.

Now, in **verses 14–22**, he looks to 3 meal tables to show how your rhythms of food consumption and table fellowship make and break covenants.

In **verse 16–17** we find description of the Lord's Table.

In **verse 18** we return the table fellowship Israel enjoyed at the altar of the Lord.

In **verse 19–21** Paul turns to consider the effect of eating at "the table of demons."

Setting up these tables is a command to flee idols (v. 14) and an invitation to consider his words (v. 15).

Like earlier in chapter 7, Paul doesn't come hard and heavy with commands. Rather, his tone is that of an affectionate father – **"My beloved"**

He commands them to flee idols . . . but the force of his argument is rational not legal **"I speak as to sensible [wise] people"**

This is how he begins . . . or better, how he continues his argument from **verses 1–13**.

Then on the other end of this argument (v. 22): Paul asks 2 questions:

"Shall we provoke the Lord to anger? [AND] Are we stronger than he?"

The second question compares the strength of the Corinthians to that of the LORD.

Interestingly, he includes himself with them.

He's saying he too possesses freedom like the strong in Corinth, but he reminds all who are strong to walk in humility and fear before the Lord.

Why? . . . BECAUSE the Lord is stronger!

Now to get exactly at Paul's opening command and closing question,

. . . we need to pull out the three tables to see what happens to those who sit down

But to rightly understand the comparison between Lord's Table, Israel altar, and meals devoted to demons . . . we need to see the covenantal nature of this passage.

The Covenant in Scripture

The word covenant (*berith*) shows up 288x in the OT; covenant in NT (*diatheke*) is used 33x.

Covenant is a word that defines relationships between God and man, man and man, man and woman (=marriage), as well as, among kings and nations.

In fact, the concept of covenant is so central to the makeup of the Bible, Scripture is divided into two covenants – old and new – “testament” is the Latin word for covenant.

In our letter, Paul uses the word once, just like Jesus did w/ respect to the Lord’s Table.

11:25 – He recalls what he has received from the Lord and now delivers to the Cs.

“This is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it.”

These words quote Jesus’ words at the Passover as they are recorded in Luke.

Matthew uses a similar expression but goes further (26:28). He says:

“For this is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many for the **forgiveness of sins**.”

At the heart of Jesus’ death is the inauguration of the new covenant;

In fact, you could say that the new covenant sets the context for the cross.

As OT sacrifices were explained by God’s covenant with Israel mediated by Moses,

SO Christ’s sacrifice is explained by the new covenant now mediated by our risen Lord

If we’re going to understand Christ’s cross at all we must understand the new covenant.

And in many places, we will find that a healthy understanding of the new covenant . . . is most helpful for understanding Paul’s argument.

1 Corinthians 10 is one of those places.

In fact, I think we can see at least four ways that Paul’s contrast . . .

between the Lord’s Table and the table of demons

. . . is best explained in covenantal terms.

Four Covenantal Signs

1. Look at the word **“Participation.”** It is used 4x in this passage, and it refers to something more than an accidental or convenient association.

Participation has the idea of “a common possession or enjoyment of something” (BDAG). IOW, it’s more than a coincidence or contract. It’s communion we have w/ X.

v. 16 – our participation is in his blood and in his body – explained by Christ himself, this is unmistakably covenantal

~ v. 18 – Israel was the covenant people of YHWH . . . they dined with him as his children
They were not like customers who enjoy the restaurant of their choosing

Remember – The altar in the tabernacle was called God’s mercy seat = the place God sat
And the external altar in the courtyard connected God to man / man to God.

So participation speaks of covenantal relations. This begins to explain the problem Paul sees in Corinth – **Xians were making covenant with demons thru these ritual meals**

2. The **“cup of blessing”** (v. 16) is a term that comes from the final cup of wine at the Passover, a meal that was enjoyed by the covenant people of Israel.

Paul has applied this terminology to the Lord’s Supper, which is clearly in view from the rest of verse 16:

“participation in the blood of X” and “participation in the body of X” . . .
. . . are indications P is describing the meal Jesus adopted from the Passover

Moreover, in the Bible . . . blessings are always defined by a covenant.

There’s no such thing as a free agent blessing – Blessings are always defined by and delivered through a covenant. **So this language also frames Paul’s comparison.**

3. The question concerning the **Lord’s jealousy** (v. 22) has as a covenantal backdrop.

More specifically, it comes from **Deuteronomy 32**.

As Moses led Israel to re-commit themselves to the Sinai covenant, he wrote a song to remember it. That song is Deut 32, and it highlights Israel’s covenant-breaking

In it, Moses recounted Israel’s adultery vs. God . . . something that could only be said because Israel was in covenant with God – that is to say they were “married to God.”

Thus when they attached themselves to other gods through idolatry, they committed spiritual adultery (and physical adultery) . . . and provoked God to anger.

This language requires a covenantal reading of this passage.

4. Finally, the discussion about meals requires a biblical understanding of covenants.

To say it differently, in the ANE (culture around Israel) and throughout OT,

. . . meals were the culminating feature of a covenant.

. . . That is to say when two people or two nations or Yahweh and his people made a legal agreement – a covenant – they celebrated by enjoying a meal.

For instance,

In **Genesis 26:26–33**, Isaac and Abimelech “cut a covenant” (v. 28) and this covenant is followed by a meal: “**So he made a feast, and they ate and drank**” (v. 30).

Likewise, when Jacob and Laban “cut a covenant” to repair the breach of trust between them (**Gen 31:43–54**), a sacrifice and a meal ratified the agreement: “**Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country and called his kinsmen to eat bread**” (v. 54).

As one author has put, covenants in the Old Testament created kinship relationships. Those who were not previously related, now by covenant, are one family.

Marriage is probably the supreme example of this . . . And lo & behold . . . what accompanies a marriage covenant – a glorious wedding feast!

Just the same, God’s people feasted with him whenever he initiated a covenant with them.

In **Genesis 18** . . . Yahweh came and dined with Abraham and his wife in the process of completely his covenant and giving Abraham a son.

Most amazing, after the covenant was made with Israel, 70 elders from Israel ascended Mount Sinai. **Exod 24:11** says, “they beheld God and ate and drank.”

Such feasting continued throughout the OT by means of the sacrificial system – this is what Paul is getting at in v. 18.

Sure there were sin offerings & atonement for sin and impurity, but there was also the peace offerings where the people of God enjoyed a meal with God.

All these features are tied to the concept of covenant . . .

By rehearsing them we are positioned to see how abominable it would be for a man in covenant with God to go and eat a meal sacrificed to idols and then say “That idol is nothing. What’s the problem?”

It would be the same as a man hiring a prostitute and coming home to his wife and saying . . . “Oh that woman, she doesn’t mean anything to me. **Why are you upset!?!**

You can see the problem, right? Idolatry is not a petty sin; it is spiritual adultery!

Communion

And Paul aware of this . . . even as the Corinthians are blind to it . . . is writing in ch. 10 to set up a covenantal contrast between these three tables.

And his goal is to press the Corinthians to commune with God and his people at the Lord's Table . . . even as they resist the temptation to go and eat at the table of demons!

So, Paul identifies three forms of communion at three different tables.

First, in verses 16 – 17 he says . . . **READ**

In verse 16, he takes up the two elements of the Lord's Supper and says these are means by which the church "participate" or "commune" with the Lord.

What does this mean?

Well, it doesn't mean that the cup or the bread has any kind of magical property.

This verse is not a proof-text for trans-substantiation or any view that makes the bread and wine a physical conveyor of grace.

No . . . the participation is covenantal, not super-spiritual. Sorry Calvin, even saying that there is "real presence" in the elements is too close to Rome.

Our relationship with God is mediated by the Word and the Spirit.

Therefore, the means by which we commune with Christ's blood is by faith in the gospel which is proclaimed in the Lord's Supper by crushed grapes and baked bread.

Grace is in the WORD of the LS not the elements: As Paul says in 11:26: **"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you PROCLAIM the Lord's death until he comes"**

So the first takeaway is not that we eat this meal . . . not to receive some super power.

Rather, we eat this bread and drink this cup in faith . . .
. . . as a sign of allegiance to the one who died for us.

That's the vertical takeaway . . . as we commune with the risen Christ.

The horizontal takeaway comes in v 17, as Paul speaks of church unity thru the "one loaf."

In fact, in this one verse he speaks three times of our one-ness.

Because there is one bread,
We who are many are one body
For we all partake of the one bread.

This verse has given shape to the practice of breaking the one bread when church's take the Lord's Supper. That's a good practice, but it is only a superficial application.

The more theological point is that we who are many . . . are one in Christ.

The many members of Christ are unified in one body.

Paul will develop this truth in chapters 12 – 14, but it bears consideration here.

In the Lord's Supper, we are not only celebrating the communion we have with God.

We are remembering the communion we have with one another.

IOW, Paul says there's nothing Godward in the Xian life that is not also man-ward.

To obey the Great Commandment you must love God AND neighbor!

If you say I love God, but don't care for others, John says you are a liar.

Likewise, Paul says to a church divided between strong and weak, rich and poor, the Lord's Supper is meant to teach you who you are . . .

You are one in body and Spirit with those whom you sit next to!

IMAGINE THE IMPACT THIS WOULD HAVE ON OUR RHYTHMS OF LIVE . . . IF WE LIVED IN LIGHT OF THIS TRUTH!

As you commune with God in the Lord's Supper, you also commune with one another!
If you are in covenant with God through Christ . . . than you are also in covenant w/ OA

This is the point Paul is driving at . . . those who commune in X *MUST* commune w/ others.

To reinforce this, he points to OT sacrifices to remind them that those who were identified as Israel shared meals in the Lord's presence.

Literally, Paul calls them "Israel *according* to the flesh" . . . a term designating Israel under the OC . . . and not Israel *according* to the Spirit, those Jews now in X.

He makes this connection to remind them of the way that mutual faith in the sacrifices of God, coupled with covenant meals maintained Israel's identity.

In other words, the communion they shared with the Lord created a culture that stood in distinction from the world.

This is Paul's goal in the church, too – a people defined by their mutual communion at the Lord's Table, a culture that arises from the same new covenant in Christ.

But . . . if this Christ-centered culture is going to arise from a covenantal communion, the church must forsake all other tables. And this brings us to the third table.

In **verses 19 – 21** Paul says . . . READ

In v. 19 . . . he clarifies his point. Earlier in 8:4 he quoted and affirmed the Corinthians who said, **“we know that “an idol has no real existence,”**

Now in v. 19, he hasn't changed his views. He still believes that idols have no power in themselves.

Compared to God and under God . . . Satan and every unclean Spirit has no authority.

But that doesn't stop Satan and his hoards from deceiving and destroying.

The devil continues to prowl . . .

He has no power to destroy eternally those purchased by the blood of Christ, . . . But he can lie, deceive, and lead you to worship false gods.

He can't take the Christian's eternal life . . . but like Samson, who adulterated his affections, he can sap strength and gouge out eyes.

He knows that he cannot destroy your soul, but he can lead your body to places that will make you feel like you have lost God and all his grace.

So, Paul teaches us a precious lesson here . . .

One of the most effective ways Satan works is to make you believe that consorting with idols is no big deal.

Or even more effectively . . . to believe that idols are nothing and the created things you enjoy and invest are NOT idols.

This is apparently what he had accomplished in Corinth . . .

Many of the strong took their spiritual knowledge . . . and brazenly entered the temple and ate meat devoted to false gods – to demons!

Instead of fearing the temple w/ its pagan activities . . . these Xians took liberty to eat and drink food sacrificed to idols and to enjoy communion with those doing the same.

Paul says, . . . Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Not so fast. You can't do that.

“You can't enjoy communion with the Lord AND turn around and commune w/ those who are worshiping demons!”

“You may be strong . . . but you are not strong enough. Don't be deceived!”

Rather, flee from idols and the tables they set . . . Return to the Lord before you provoke him to jealousy . . .”

This is Paul's argument . . .

It is an appeal for the wise and strong to consider their ways and to keep covenant by communing with God and his people . . .

All of 1 Corinthians 10 has been levied to urge the Corinthians to turn their back on the powerful and well-positioned people inviting them to the demonic tables.

IOW, Paul is calling the Corinthians . . . he's calling YOU and ME to: **GET RHYTHM**

What is that rhythm?

The rhythm is to press deeper into the life of Christ and his body.

It is To be found faithful at the Lord's Table . . .
 To gather in worship and remember who you are in Christ
 To participate in the life of the church and to commune with Christ and his body
 To experience week-in & week-out a CULTURE created by communion w Christ
 To go into the world on mission for Christ, empowered by communion w/ him.

IMAGINE what happens when this rhythm is rejected or ignored . . .

What becomes of the child of God? Will his salvation protect him from corruption?
No, he will continue to act like the world . . . to chase idols . . . and provoke the Lord!

And this is why Paul is so emphatic that you commune w/ the Lord and his people . . .
. . . Because it is only in that RHYTHM that you will have joy and power

 to say NO to the idols that once ensnared you . . .
 and YES to the God who has redeemed you.

IMAGINE what would happen if this rhythm marked your life . . . it would be transformative . .
. it would supply the power and the joy to do what God has called you to do.

Are you lacking in joy in the Lord . . . check your rhythms!

Do you know what you should do . . . but find yourself failing again and again . . .
MAYBE . . . you're communing at the tables of demons... and don't even know it

Next week . . . we will double dip in this passage to talk about that . . . and how
communion with Christ . . . exposes our idols . . . overturns our idolatrous ways.

This week . . . the takeaway is an invitation to come and feast . . . to set the rhythms of
your life according to the communion of the saints . . . and watch what happens!

You were created to enjoy communion with God and his saints.

This is the gift that God wants all his children to experience . . . and it comes when you
get a rhythm . . . SO child of God . . . get a rhythm and delight yourself in God.