



The Problem With Idolatry

The Word & Prayer

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Idolatry

Idolatry is image worship or divine honour paid to any created object.

Guard yourself from Idols.

1 John 5:21

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Many things can take God's place in our lives. This includes anything that substitutes for the true faith, anything that denies Christ's full deity and humanity, any human idea that claims to be more authoritative than the Bible, any loyalty that replaces God at the center of our life.

They have turned from idols to serve a living God.

1 Thes. 1:9

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

All of us should respond to the Good News as the Thessalonians did: *Turn* to God, *serve* God, and *look forward* to the return of his Son, Christ, from heaven. We should turn from sin to God because Christ is coming to judge the earth.

We should be fervent in our service because we have little time before Christ returns. We should be prepared for Christ to return because we don't know when he will come.

You shall not make yourselves idols

Leviticus 26:1

Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the Lord your God.

The people of the Old Testament were warned over and over against worshiping idols. We wonder how they could deceive themselves with these objects of wood and stone.

Yet God could well give us the same warning, for we are prone to put idols before him. Idolatry is making anything more important than God, and our lives are full of that temptation. Money, looks, success, reputation, security—these are today's idols.

As you look at these false gods that promise everything you want but nothing you need, does idolatry seem so far removed from your experience?

You shall have no false God's

Exodus 20:3-6

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. [4] Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

[5] Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

[6] And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

The Israelites had just come from Egypt, a land of many idols and many gods. Because each god represented a different aspect of life, it was common to worship many gods in order to get the maximum number of blessings.

When God told his people to worship and believe in him, that wasn't so hard for them—he was just one more god to add to the list. But when he said, "You must not have any other god but me," that was difficult for the people to accept.

But if they didn't learn that the God who led them out of Egypt was the only true God, they could not be his people—no matter how faithfully they kept the other nine commandments. Thus, God made this his first commandment.

Today we can allow many things to become gods to us. Money, fame, work, or pleasure can become gods when we concentrate too much on them for personal identity, meaning, and security.

No one sets out with the intention of worshiping these things. But by the amount of time we devote to them, they can grow into gods that ultimately control our thoughts and energies. Letting God hold the central place in our lives keeps these things from turning into gods.

Flee from idolatry

1 Cor. 10:14

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

Idol worship was the major expression of religion in Corinth. There were several pagan temples in the city, and they were very popular.

The statues of wood or stone were not evil in themselves, but people gave them credit for what only God could do, such as provide good weather, crops, and children. Idolatry is still a serious problem today, but it takes a different form.

We don't put our trust in statues of wood and stone but in paper money and plastic cards. Putting our trust in anything but God is idolatry. Our modern idols are those symbols of power, pleasure, or prestige that we so highly regard. When we understand contemporary parallels to idolatry, Paul's words to "flee from the worship of idols" become much more meaningful.

They have set up idols in the heart.

Ezekiel 14:3

Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?

God condemned the leaders for setting up idols in their hearts and then daring to come to God's prophet for advice. On the outside, they appeared to worship God, making regular visits to the Temple to offer sacrifices. But they were not sincere. It is easy for us to criticize the Israelites for worshiping idols when they so clearly needed God instead.

But we have idols in our hearts when we pursue reputation, acceptance, wealth, or sensual pleasure with the intensity and commitment that should be reserved for serving God.

They served the creature more than the creator.

Romans 1:25

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Make no graven image or likeness in earth or heaven.

Deut. 5:8

Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth:

God knows that if we put anything other than him at the center of our lives, we will not reach our potential and become all that he wants us to be.

He who sacrifices unto any God other than the Lord will be destroyed.

Exodus 22:20

He that sacrifices unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

Sorcery was punishable by death because it was a crime against God himself. To invoke evil powers violated the first commandment to not worship any other god. Sorcery was rebellion against God and his authority. In essence, it was teaming up with Satan instead of with God.

Prayer of deliverance:

Through heaven's door, The Blood of Jesus, I repent of the sin of idolatry.

I denounce and cast out this evil spirit that is influencing my life and disturbing my peace of mind.

In the authority of the name of Jesus Christ. I command this spirit to leave and be cast into utter darkness never to return again.

Right now, I receive deliverance from this spirit and receive God's peace. I pray in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

