

No Other Gods “Idolatry”

There are only three things that the New Testament commands us to “flee...”

There are many things that we are to avoid. There are many things that we are to “put off.” There are many things that we are to not longer do...BUT there are three things from which we are to run like crazy.

1. Flee sexual immorality

Sexual sins are not something that you can be casual about...they have the power to destroy our lives and our effectiveness for God.

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. I Corinthians 6:18

Paul wrote to Timothy to flee youthful lusts (II Tim. 2:22).

2. Covetousness or the love of money

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, **flee these things** and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. I Timothy 6:9-11*

What do both of these things have in common? Both could be classified as “Idolatry” which is the third thing from which we are to run.

3. Idolatry

*Therefore, my beloved, **flee from idolatry.** I Corinthians 10:14*

*But **fornication** and all uncleanness or **covetousness**, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no **fornicator**, unclean person, nor **covetous** man, who is an **idolater**, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Ephesians 5:3-5*

What is idolatry?

An idol is something other than God that takes first place in our hearts...

- ...that motivates or drives us
- ...that masters or rules us
- ...that we serve or live for.

That thing which takes first place in our lives can be any number of things: family, career, spouse, relationships, drugs, recreation, money or material possessions.

Sacrifice and discipleship call for us to adjust our priorities and put first things first. There can be no “first” but Jesus.

When Satan challenged Jesus about bowing down and worshipping him, Jesus had a ready answer.

And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

Luke 4:8

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:24

Idolatry will always be tested...and retested.

Idolatry is not something that you deal with one time.

Idolatry is something that can easily creep back into our lives.

The children of Israel in the Old Testament times repeatedly dealt with the issue of idolatry.

- They dealt with it in the wilderness when things weren’t happening as quickly as they would have liked (Moses up on the mountain delaying).
- They dealt with it when they did not drive out all of the enemies that God commanded them and settled down with them within their borders.

- They dealt with it when they conquered enemies and compromised with them by intermarrying with them.
- They dealt with it when their faith passed from one generation to the next.

Part of every revival and return to the Lord in the Old Testament was the dealing with the high places—tearing down the altars of Baal. What has the highest place in your life? God will test it.

Most of us began our walk with the Lord by dealing with many of the idols in our lives. The idols that we deal with today are not made out of wood and stone. They are more subtle than that. Our modern day idols are those things that take the place of God in our lives. God will only accept the top billing in the lives of His people. He is a jealous God.

Jesus demonstrated this in the story of the rich young ruler.

Mark 10:17-30

*Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” 18 So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’” 20 And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.” 21 **Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” 22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.***

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?” 27 But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are

possible.” 28 Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.” 29 So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, 30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Notice several things in this account.

- Jesus loved this man regardless of the issues in this man’s heart. Issues of pride and self confidence. Issues of misplaced priorities.
- Notice the commandments that Jesus did not quote in His challenge to this man.

He quoted all of the man-ward commandments except the ones about coveting.

“Thou shalt not covet...”

He didn’t quote any of the God-ward commandments especially the first one (the one that encompasses all of the others).

“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

Jesus knows how to put His finger on our gods.

I want to share a personal portion of my journey with the Lord.

- Raised in the Lutheran Church
- Not really a Christian, but I thought I was.
- Went to Lutheran schools all of my life.
- Went on to study to become a Lutheran pastor (University and Seminary).
- Even though I studied from the Bible and went to church I lived a life that was no different to non-Christians.

- In my second year of seminary I got saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit (long story).
- However, before this experience I had developed a hobby—coin collecting.
- It was a big part of my leisure time and even though I was a student and short on finances, I used much of what I did have to feed this hobby.
- I would have to say that it was something that dominated my life.
- It got so bad that I even cheated an elderly couple out of some of their old coins. I hate to tell you how bad it was.
- When I got saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit I got under conviction to make this right, even though what I had done was a serious crime for which I could go to jail.
- But God was merciful and my conscience was purged.
- Sometime later I ended up leaving the Lutheran church and moving across country to a church called City Bible Church (Bible Temple).
- When I came to City Bible Church in 1972, I enrolled in PBC as a full-time student.
- I worked part-time as an auto mechanic to make ends meet.
- I still had this coin collection that had become quite valuable.
- After being in the church for a little over a year, the church decided that they wanted to start a Christian school and they would need to buy the building adjacent to the church.
- All of the congregation was asked to make a sacrificial offering to the Lord, because once we got the building we would have to remodel it for a school.
- They asked us to pray (dangerous).

- I hadn't prayed very long before I felt the Lord say, "I want your coin collection."
- After a brief wrestling match with the Lord I took my collection to a coin dealer and asked him for an appraisal and an offer.
- While this was happening on one part of my life other things were happening in as well.
- The economy of the country was in a bad place and the business where I was working decided to shut down without notice.
- My employer announced to us all with tears in his eyes that we were all to pick up our final check later that week (they eventually gave me a check for \$200).
- At the same time my wife was going into labor to have our second child. Because we did not have insurance the hospital said that we would have to pay immediately. Because I only had \$200 to bail her out, my wife could only stay in the hospital overnight because the bill for that was \$210. When I went to pick up my wife, my mother had mercy on me and gave me an additional \$20.
- So after I paid the hospital, I walked away with my wife who had just given birth, a new baby, no job, an empty bank account and \$10 dollars in my pocket.
- A couple days later the coin dealer called and made me an offer for my coins. His offer was **more than a year's salary!**
- Praise God, an answer to prayer! Wait a minute, I had just promised my coin collection to the Lord.
- What was I to do?
- I did the only thing that I could do. I went church on Sunday and ran to the altar with the money from my coin collection.
- Was I tempted to keep the money? Absolutely. That is why I had to get rid of it as fast as I could.

- From that day to this, I have to say that we have never lacked. Time does not permit me to tell you of the miraculous way the Lord preserved us for the next number of months before we had an income again. All I will say that without telling anyone of our plight, we did not pay one bill late during that whole season.
- In fact, the very next job I had was working for the church teaching at Portland Bible College.

It isn't about what we give; it is about obedience and having no other gods before Him.

God is challenging some of us in these days much like he challenged the rich man. Does God have first place in your life?

Or are we saying, "God, you can have everything...BUT..."

There can be no first but Jesus.

I remember hearing a man say one time shortly after I gave my life fully to the Lord, "If you want to know where your heart is, look at your check book." Where is most of your non-essential money going? For me, when I looked at it at that time it was "coin collection related."

That was then, This is now. What is first in my life now. In the present.