

Gospel Treason

What Happens When We Give Our Hearts to Idols

What Does God Know About My Heart?

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Oct. 16, 2012

Jeremiah 2:11-13 “‘Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be very desolate,’ says the LORD. ‘For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn for themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.’”

Because of our sin nature that relentlessly drives us away from God and towards everything else but God, most of us have spent a lifetime digging other cisterns – places we hope will sustain us... fulfill us... satisfy us... and bring us peace and joy.

I. Idolatry is a Constant Threat Because We’re So Prone to Gospel Drift

The problem that we have with idolatry is not just a fringe issue. It’s central to all that’s going on in your life. You don’t want to treat idolatry like some footnote or addendum that you might or might not get around to addressing as it relates to the bigger issues you’re facing and struggling with in life.

Gospel drift away from your Savior is what kick-starts idolatry and throws it into gear because we were made to worship – so we will worship SOMETHING. If not Jesus, then something else!

2 Corinthians 11:2-3 “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

Idols thrive when the Gospel dies.

II. Idolatry is Alive and Well Today Even Though it’s Rarely Spoken of in Christian Circles

Idolatry is so often what’s lurking deep beneath the surface of our sins that we just can’t seem to shake... it’s what drives your strongest emotions when you can’t figure out why something makes you so angry... or so sad... or so anxious and fearful.

“Idolatry is by far the most frequently discussed problem in the Scriptures... the relevance of massive chunks of Scripture hangs on our understanding of idolatry.” David Powlison, “Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1995), p. 35

Idolatry is the most comprehensive description of what unbelief looks like. So if we misunderstand idolatry or push it out to the extreme margins of our life, we’re cutting ourselves off from one of the most comprehensive descriptions of unbelief that the biblical writers gives us.

1 John 5:21 “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”

John - the Apostle of love – wrote 105 verses about the importance of living in close, vital relationship with Jesus Christ – and then he makes this statement the final word of his letter! It leaves us asking ourselves the most basic of all questions...

- Has something or someone else besides Jesus Christ taken hold of the title deed of your heart?
- Is there something else that grips you... and owns you... and moves you to take action?

Even something GOOD... but that good thing has usurped the rightful place of Jesus Christ in your heart! And that's the constant danger!

You can confess with your lips all day long that 'Jesus is Lord', but if your choices and thoughts and actions are dominated by anything else, you're just fooling yourself.

III. The Reason Idolatry is So Pervasive is Because It's So Illusive – It Flies Under the Radar

Idolatry doesn't operate out in the open, so that's why you can struggle to even know your own heart... because the human heart is so deceptive.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? 'I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.'"

Idolatry doesn't just alienate you from the God of the universe. It also sucks the very life out of human relationships around you – and crushes them because in your idolatrous craving you end up placing demands on other people around you that they simply cannot bear... because they are sinful, finite, and in most cases busy chasing their own idols! And you've turned FROM God to the created being. No wonder you're so disappointed and bitter and disillusioned.

Romans 1:21-23, 25 "Because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man... they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator..."

Anything you exchange for God is a lie because it promises more than it can deliver.

Two things inevitably start to happen whenever idolatry kicks into gear –

- (1) Your human relationships start to heat up in a most unhealthy way because of all the friction created by your unspoken demands and expectations that you're heaping onto the people around you
- (2) Your most important relationship with the God of the universe gets pushed over into deep freeze – all the while you're praying and begging God to make this human relationship what you need it to be – and you keep wondering why He's not answering!

God won't help you chase your idols.

Isaiah 42:8 "I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images."

An idol is ANYTHING or anyone that begins to CAPTURE our HEARTS and MINDS and AFFECTIONS more than God.

IV. If You'll Dig Deep Enough Idolatry is Almost Always the Sin Beneath the Sin

Idolatry is at the hub of our sin! Picture a bicycle wheel with a central hub and spokes running out from it all the way around. The hub is where your idols live – and every one of those spokes are specific sins.

And so our specific sins – if you would take the time and do the hard work to check into it – can usually be traced back to one of our 'idols' almost every time!

"Sin is what we do when we're not satisfied in God." - John Piper

Homework

1. **“Identifying Personal Idols”** worksheet – several times.
2. **Ask God** WHAT your idols are.
3. **Pray Psalm 139:23–24** - “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”