

Sunday Celebration (January 17, 2010)  
***"The Function & Feel of Idolatry"***

**Personal Idols (Pt. 2)**

**INTRO ...** The Relevance of a Study of Idolatry

*"Why is idolatry so important in the Bible? Idolatry is by far the most frequently discussed problem in the Scriptures. So what? Is the problem of idolatry even relevant today, except on certain mission fields where worshipers still bow to images?"* **David Powlison**, *"Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair'"*

In Scripture we meet a host of IDOLS:

**Baal** – Baal was the farm god who gave increase to family and field, flocks and herds. (from The New Unger's Bible Dictionary)

**Ashtoreth** – Canaanite goddess of fertility

**Gad** – the god of fortune; known as "the greater luck" to the Arabs

**Ra** – an Egyptian sun-god

**Adad** – a Mesopotamian storm-god

**Marduk** – a Babylonian god of war

***What's In Us That Lends Itself to the Invention & Pursuit of Idols***

***– Is Idolatry RELEVANT to Our Modern Lives Today?***

**2Ki 17:6-12, 16-17** (also v. 29-31)

***... Children were sacrificed in order for the sacrificers to obtain a better life***

Today... our society doesn't offer our children in fire—but we do "SACRIFICE" our children in order to obtain what we believe will be a better life:

## Idolatry is at the Top of God's List of Concerns

### Ex 20:1-3

- What/Who will we Worship – this is ALWAYS the Question of 1<sup>st</sup> Importance!!

... ***As Worship Goes, So Goes Our Lives*** .....The rest of the commands address the issues of Harm & Dysfunction that accompany idolatry

.... **The Rest of the Commands Depend on This command.**

*"Now this is the work of the First Commandment, which commands: "Thou shalt have no other gods," which means: "Since I alone am God, thou shalt place all thy confidence, trust and faith on Me alone, and on no one else." For that is not to have a god, ... this faith, faithfulness, confidence deep in the heart, is the true fulfilling of the First Commandment; without this there is no other work that is able to satisfy this Commandment. And as this Commandment is the very first, highest and best, from which all the others proceed, in which they exist, and by which they are directed and measured, so also its work, that is, the faith or confidence in God's favor at all times, is the very first, highest and best, from which all others must proceed, exist, remain, be directed and measured." Martin Luther, "Treatise on Good Works"*

***Commandment #1 Sits as a TOGGLE SWITCH... Either set on God or on an Idol. All the other commands/practices of our lives take their cue from the Toggle Setting***

*"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'"**

- One Clearly Walks away from the Bible with the notion that IDOLATRY IS GOING TO BE THE PROBLEM!!

**1500 yrs later in the N.T.** – as in Our Modern Day – The Setting and Props have changed.... But the Concern is Still the Same—“IDOLATRY IS GOING TO BE THE PROBLEM!!

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

*“In a 105-verse treatise on living in vital fellowship with Jesus, the Son of God, how on earth does that unexpected command merit being the final word? ...John’s last line properly leaves us with that most basic question which God continually poses to each human heart. Has something or someone besides Jesus the Christ taken title to your heart’s trust, preoccupation, loyalty, service, fear and delight?” David Powlison, “Idols of the Heart and ‘Vanity Fair’”*

*If you’re surveying your life looking for Baal, Molech, Golden Calves, or Zeus than you’ll be apt to conclude that your life is “Idol Free”. But to do so is to OVERLOOK THE TRUE NATURE OF IDOLATRY.*

## **The Function & Feel of Idolatry**

*“Idolatry is not so much about the external images and props as it is about what the heart is craving when it makes use of those props”*

**Ez 14:1-3**

*“The heart is first corrupted, and then the outward manifestation of idol-worship follows...” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database)*

*“leeb `al he`elaah means, to allow anything to come into the mind, to permit it to rise up in the heart, to be mentally busy therewith. ...“To set before one’s face” is also to be understood, in a spiritual sense, as relating to a thing which a man will not put out of his mind.” (from Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database)*

*"the Bible internalizes the problem. 'Idols of the heart' are graphically portrayed in Ez 14:1-8. The worship of tangible idols is, ominously, an expression of a prior heart defection from YHWH your God. 'Idols of the heart' is only one of many metaphors which move the locus of God's concerns into the human heart, establishing an unbreakable bond between specifics of heart and specifics of behavior.*

*If 'idolatry' is the characteristic and summary Old Testament word for our drift from God, then 'desires' is the characteristic and summary New Testament word for the same drift." David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair'"*

## **Idols Build Their Hive in the HEART – the Location of our DESIRES & CRAVINGS**

### **Jam 1:13-15 and 4:1-6**

1<sup>st</sup> you DESIRE ... then you murder. 1<sup>st</sup> You Desire Something More Than God (TOGGLE SWITCH), Then You Break the Other Commands!!

Why this dysfunction in relationships—because of 'Adulterous Hearts' (Toggled wrong)

### **How to Find Idolatry:**

- Look for Strong Desires ... longings and cravings of the heart that tend to become obsessive and overflow their levees.
- Look for Conflict ... when I want something too much, I invariably will trample you to get what I want. I become reckless and lose the motivation of Sacrificial Care & Love for others.
- Look for Strong Emotion ... Anger! ..... Irritation ..... Fear

Security in Life .... Peace of Mind about Provision .... Success/Accomplishment compared to others .... Power/Influence over others (CONTROL) .... Respect .... Luxury & Life Comforts

Do We Crave Any of These?

Are We Being DRIVEN & CONTROLLED by these Cravings?

Is my Happiness & Hope Bound Up in These Things?

Do I become Despondent & Depressed when I can't have these things?

Once These Cravings are Strong & Influential in My Life – THEN, I seek some "Means" of Getting What I'm Eagerly Desiring.