

Christians And Modern Idolatry

'Let those who think they stand, be careful you do not fall. No temptation (to sin) has influenced you except what is common to mankind. God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted (to sin) above what you are able to avoid, but will with the temptation (to sin) He will make a way of escape, so you may be able to endure it. Therefore my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men (and women). Judge what I say' (1 Corinthians 10:12 to 15).

'Walk by the Holy Spirit and you will not fulfil the lust of the flesh, for the flesh lusts against the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is against the (sins of the) flesh. These are contrary to one another so you may not do the things you desire ... the works of the flesh are obvious, which are all forms of sexual immorality, lustfulness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness and things like these of which I forewarn you, those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God' (Galatians 5:16 to 21). 'Put to death your sins which are on the earth, all sexual immorality, uncleanness, depraved passion, evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry for which things incur the wrath of God which comes down on the children of disobedience' (Colossians 3:5 & 6). 'While the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn whom God had struck among them and on their gods also, God executed His judgments' (Numbers 33:4).

God executed severe judgement on the ancient Egyptians because of their idolatry. 'You will not do so to the Lord your God, for every abomination to the Lord which He hates, have they done to their gods' (Deuteronomy 12:31). Sadly, many Christians are unaware they are living in a state of idolatry and they might be judged accordingly, just as the Egyptians were. Too many Christians think living with the carnality of the world is normal when we should all be standing for righteousness and not giving into the temptations of the world. These idolatrous sins are of the flesh and must be overcome if we are to enter the Kingdom of God. One of the most active sins in the world today is idolatry, although many Christians are unaware they are doing that. The world does not know any better than to practice idolatry but as Christians we must not do that. God will bring sorrow to the lives of anyone, even Christians, who have an idol (2 Chronicles 7:22). We must, 'Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good' (Romans 12:9).

Apostle Paul most certainly never had idols but he did have difficulties with temptations and he knew he could be delivered from his sin through the strength of the blood of Jesus. 'The good I desire to do, I do not do, but the evil I do not desire to do, that I practice. If I do what I do not desire, it is the sin nature dwelling in me. I find then the laws (of God) to me, while I desire to do good, evil is always present. My body wars against the law of my mind and brings me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my body. What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me out of this body of death? I thank God through Jesus our Lord! So with the mind, I myself serve God's law' (Romans 7:19 to 25). If someone realises they have been idolatrous in some way, they can repent and ask forgiveness but they must never do it again or they risk the wrath of God. Overcoming sin is very difficult for us mortal humans but if we are to be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven we must overcome this body of sin with our carnal desires. Jesus has overcome sin on our behalf. Jesus said, "I have told you these things so in Me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression but cheer up! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). 'A person is brought into bondage by whoever or whatever overcomes them' (2 Peter 2:19). 'Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good' (Romans 12:21). 'You are of God and have overcome evil because greater is He (God) Who is in you than he (the devil) that is in the world' (1 John 4:4). Giving into idolatry is bringing oneself into bondage but we must overcome that evil by the goodness of God.

Idolatry is one of the sins God hates the most, so all Christians need to be aware of what modern idolatry is. God likens idolatry to spiritual prostitution and unfaithfulness to God Himself (Hosea 4:12). One area of idolatry is having images of angels in the house. Scripturally that is an abomination (Deuteronomy 29:17). We are forbidden to have any graven images in our homes and that includes images of angels or cherubim. 'You will not make for yourselves an idol nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above (angels, cherubim) or what is in the earth beneath (animals, people, plant life) or what is in the water under the earth (sea creatures)' (Exodus 20:4). Keeping an idol in your home will be a snare to whoever lives there (Psalm 106:36). If there is an idol in your home it must be smashed or burned, not sold or given away. 'You will burn the engraved images of the idols with fire. You will not covet the silver or the gold on them, nor take it for yourself lest you be snared in it for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. You will not bring an abomination into your house and become a devoted thing like it. You will utterly detest it and you will utterly abhor it for it is a devoted thing' (Deuteronomy 7:25 & 26). What Christians can do is pray and ask God to show them if they have any form of idol in the home and if God reveals something to you, it must be destroyed. If anyone refuses to destroy their idols they are being rebellious and stubborn. 'Rebellion is (the same) as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is (the same) as idolatry' (1 Samuel 15:23).

Putting anyone or anything before Jesus or in the place of Him is idolatry. Jesus said, "Anyone who loves family more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37). "If anyone comes to Me and does not love Me more than their own father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, yes and their own life also, they cannot be My disciple ... Whoever of you who does not renounce all they have cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26 & 33). 'All they have' is material gain so anyone who puts their material possessions before God cannot be regarded as a disciple. Look at this actual example of a man who rejected Jesus in favour of his wealth and possessions. 'As Jesus was going out into the street, a young man ran to Him, knelt before Him and asked, "Good Teacher, what can I do so I may inherit eternal life?" ... Jesus looking at him loved him and said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven then and come, follow Me, taking up the cross." His face fell at that saying and he went away sorrowful for he was one who had great possessions. Jesus said to His disciples, "How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God" (Mark 10:17, 21 to 23). We cannot expect to be blessed if we put anyone or anything before the Lord and that includes family or wealth. We must honour our parents but continue to put Jesus first.

Why does modern idolatry thrive? Because we were created to worship the Lord God our Creator and when people reject God, they still have that innate need to worship something so they turn their worship to idols, gods, icons or anything else they find to worship. The problem with ungodly worship and idolatry, is it slowly draws those people further and further away from the Lord Whom we should worship and adore, until their lives are so caught up with their idols they find it near impossible to turn back to God. The rejection of God leads to rejection of our Saviour Jesus, Who is the only way to salvation. That rejection finally leads to hatred of God, hatred of being corrected or challenged and that in turn leads to hatred of Christians, Jewish people, churches and Godly people. Eventually their idol worship overtakes their mind until we have the terrible, carnal behaviour we see in many famous people around the world today. Unsaved people fail to realise two very important facts. Fact one is, we are made up of body, soul and spirit of life. Jesus did not come to save our body, He came to save our soul. Our spirit of life leaves the body at death and remains with the soul, which will either go to heaven or hell to await the final judgement. A soul in heaven will live forever with God but a soul in hell will be separated from God forever. Fact two is, a relationship with God is not only for this earth, it is for eternity. If there is no relationship with God on earth, there will not be any relationship with God after death. The only people in heaven will be people who have walked with God while on earth and died while they continued their walk with Him. If we put anything before God, that thing is an idol.

Another modern form of idolatry is the family pet, especially dogs. Many people idolise their dogs. They may stay away from church if the dog is sick or if it dislikes being alone. Worse still, if they bring their dog to church. That is pure idolatry. They love their dog more than they love Jesus. Scripturally, dogs are unclean animals (Leviticus 11:27) and should never enter the house of God. We are never to give what is holy (like a worship service) to dogs (Matthew 7:6). Dogs may seem to be a mundane topic but remember, all scripture is written by inspiration from God to instruct us in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus never owned a pet and neither did any of the disciples. They were all interested in people more than animals and Jesus was our perfect example, so we should all have the same attitude. People should always take precedence over animals. Most people have never given a thought about what the Bible says about dogs but as we can see by the Scriptures, dogs are not high in the Lord's favourite animal list. The Lord associates dogs with pigs, murderers, idolatry, witchcraft, prostitutes, homosexuals, gore, violence, evil, worthlessness, foolishness, greed, deception and sinful religious leaders who love to destroy the souls of innocent people. There is not one verse in the Bible that speaks of dogs in a positive way but there are over fifty verses putting dogs in a negative light along with jackals, wild dogs, wolves, hyenas and other canines. There is not one verse that mentions dogs as domestic pets except those owned by ungodly people. The Scriptures make it clear what dogs were created for – scavengers to clean up rotting carcasses like vultures do. If we take a dog for a walk even on a leash, it will instinctively pick up any food that is left on the ground. Dogs will eat what other carnivores will not touch – rotting food.

The Lord does not directly say we cannot own dogs, but it is strongly implied. Owning dogs may not be sin, but what is sin is idolising your pet, whether it be a dog or some other animal. Many Christians who would be horrified at the thought of idolatry, actually idolise their dogs without realising it. Some Christians spend more money on their dogs' health than they do on the health of their children. There are people who are called to the mission field who will not go because it would mean parting with their dog. Some people replace natural human affection with the unnatural desire to receive affection from their dogs. Some dog owners allow their dogs to disrupt home group meetings. Some people regard their dogs as substitute 'children'. Like spoilt children, some dogs whimper and yelp until they receive attention. People often spend more time with their dogs than in Bible reading and prayer. People who claim to love Jesus would never give their dog up for Him. All that is idolatry and there would be many hundreds of Christians who would need to repent of idolising their dogs or other pets. If we are serious about wanting to please God then we need to put all carnal things out of our lives and walk the narrow path the Lord set before us (Matthew 7:13 & 14). Dogs do not save

souls. Dogs cannot spread the Gospel message of salvation. Dogs do not lead us to holiness, they do not bring spiritual growth, they do not glorify God, they can never replace the holy and pure love of the Father and they most certainly do not edify. Dogs are of no spiritual value. If we want to experience love, we need to turn to the Lord and receive His love. Our mandate as Christians is to obediently serve and glorify God, spread the Gospel and love humans, especially fellow Christians. Dog ownership is not beneficial for the Kingdom of God. The Bible says, 'All things are lawful for me but not all things are beneficial and do not edify' (1 Corinthians 10:23).

Here is a fact we need to pay close attention to. In the Bible, where there were domestic dogs, there was idolatry, evil and sin. Scripturally, dogs and idolatry go hand in hand. How many people have ever considered that? Notice in this modern world, the further humanity moves away from God the more dog ownership has increased globally. Ancient Egypt had domestic dogs and we know that nation came under terrible judgement for the idolatry in the land. The ten plagues during the time of Moses were for judgement on Egypt. We know Egypt worshipped various canines as 'gods' and we know idol worship originates from evil spirits. We notice the Lord's chosen people, the Children of Israel did not keep domestic dogs. How many people have noticed that? The Lord's people were not allowed to own dogs because they were unclean animals. At the time Israel was to flee from Egypt, the Lord God silenced all the dogs owned by the Egyptians. 'There will be a great cry throughout all Egypt, such as there has not been nor will be again. But against any of the Children of Israel a dog will not bark or move its tongue, against man or animal so you will know the Lord makes a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel' (Exodus 11:6 & 7) or between good and evil. The Lord made the distinction between the idolaters who owned dogs and His people who did not own dogs. That implies the Lord's people – Christians, should not own dogs either. That is something Christians need to consider and pray about. The Lord has authority over everything evil, including the evil spirits that inhabited the dogs owned by the Egyptians and He silenced them. Many hundreds of years later, Jesus also took authority and silenced evil spirits when He was on earth. Many people do not realise dogs are capable of 'housing' evil spirits and their owners might need to be delivered from the spirit of the dog. 'Deliver my soul from the sword and my precious life from the spirit of the dog' (Psalm 22:20). People who overly 'love' and idolise their dog are practicing a form of idolatry and could possibly have a spirit of the dog in their soul without realising it

Dog ownership is a carnal desire and is sometimes driven by an evil spirit. In some countries, demon possessed dogs called 'spirit dogs' only ever attack Christians. Bible believing Christians need to ask themselves these questions: Would you give up your dog for Jesus? Would you give up your dog to go out and save souls? Is the dog more important to you than the salvation of people? Does your dog come before the Lord in your life? Do you love your dog more than you love God? Do you tend to your dog's needs before obeying the Lord's commands? Are you unknowingly idolising your pet? We hear of pet dogs turning on their owners or neighbours for no apparent reason and causing terrible injuries or death. Dogs have been known to attack and kill children and that has happened many times. The Scripture says, 'The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy' (John 10:10). We can assume, when a dog turns on a human suddenly and for no apparent reason, it could be the moment when the evil spirit in the dog takes control of the animal. We know dogs are pack animals and they are naturally aggressive. Barking is a sign of aggression. In the wild, dogs bark to warn off other animals. In our society, dogs bark to warn off people, so the dog is acting aggressively on behalf of its 'pack' – the owners. In this day and age, aggression is politically unacceptable. To counter that, many people acquire a dog to be aggressive in their place. That can be seen by the way dog owners react angrily when a neighbour who wants to stop the dog from barking, confronts them. The dog owner almost always reacts indignantly and with aggression and Christians are no exception. Christians can become very haughty when challenged over their dog. They often do not act very Godly because they love their dogs more than they love their neighbours and the Bible says we must love our neighbours. If you are a Christian with an annoying barking dog, you are not loving your neighbours – you are antagonising them. Is that being a good witness to the unsaved? The constant barking is irritating and we are told to live in peace in the grace of God. Christians should set an example to the people in the world – not be like them.

Sport is another form of modern idolatry. Sports people are just that, people who choose to play their preferred sport. They are not superhuman gods to be worshipped. They tune their bodies for the optimum performance but they are just people who choose that lifestyle. The way sports people are adored is idol worship. Many sportsmen, especially footballers behave wickedly, leading younger people astray by enticing them to copy their wicked behaviours. They are not people to be admired, looked up to or copied. They are not even worthy of respect, so they are not heroes, they just play sport. Sadly, many children are caught up in this form of idolatry. Many sports people become very wealthy because their idolatrous followers are foolish and gullible enough to spend their hard earned cash just to go and watch them play their games, while they make much money out of your foolish and misguided adoration. Why bother? Your money would be better spent fulfilling your own dreams for your life, or helping a poor person fulfil their dreams. Look at the so-called 'Mexican wave'. That is pure idolatry! They are bowing down to their idols. If you are a Christian

and miss church, Christian fellowship or Bible study to train or play sport, that sport is your idol. It means you love your sport more than you love serving God. He needs to be number one in your life.

Actors and actresses frequently become idols. Actors are just that, people who choose to pretend to be someone they are not. So-called 'superheroes' are not heroes at all. They are merely people dressed up to play a fantasy role which is impossible in the real world. They do not teach children anything. Good overcomes evil by following the goodness of God, not by playacting. Actors become wealthy because people have the need to be entertained and they need to worship something so instead of worshipping God they worship their chosen actor/actress, worshipping the creature rather than worshipping God our Creator (Romans 1:25). Musicians and singers are also worshipped. Watch the young people scream, become hysterical and even faint at the sight of musicians and singers performing on stage. It really is a pathetic sight. And again, these people make huge amounts of money because gullible people are foolish enough to spend their money by helping make these greedy musicians wealthier. Look at the godless behaviour of many famous actors, actresses, musicians and singers. Many of them are alcoholics and/or heavy smokers. Most of them take large quantities of illegal drugs. They often take pride in themselves after completely destroying hotel rooms instead of being grateful they have a safe, comfortable place to stay while travelling. Look at how many times they marry and divorce. Look at the ridiculous names they give their children. How can anyone in their right mind adore such people? Most of them are not worthy of any respect, much less adoration. Yes, we can enjoy good music without knowing who wrote or performed it.

Many famous people are titled 'legends'. A legend is a story, a fable or a myth; they are not real and neither are the personal lives of the famous people to the majority of the population. Whether they play sport or act in a role, that famous person is just an image to most people. What people are doing is worshipping the image of what they think that famous person is but they do not know the famous person, personally. They are only worshipping what they can see or hear on television, theatres, photographs, mobile/cell phones or from a distance. Those human idols are fabricated legends, which are myths or fables. Like the ancient Egyptians, modern people often worship the created human, instead of worshipping God our Creator. 'They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creatures rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen' (Romans 1:25).

Fashions, clothing, shoes or make up can all become idols if they become an obsession. We need to purchase and wear only what we need. Anything else is greed or pride. Food can become an idol. Overeating or gluttony is sin. We should eat only what we need to remain healthy and the correct weight. 'Collecting' is just an obsession and can become an idol. If you have way more than you need and have difficulty letting go of the excess, that is idolatry. Give to your excess to the poor and allow someone else to enjoy what you do not need. 'Collecting' is another way of hoarding. It is covetousness which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Someone who collects stamps, paintings, antiques or anything else above what is needed is called a fool by God Himself, plus they have a poor relationship toward God. 'God said, "You foolish one, tonight your soul is required of you (he was destined to die that night). The things you have hoarded, whose will they be?" So are they who lay up treasure for themselves and are not rich toward God' (Luke 12:20 & 21). A beloved car can become an idol. Some people idolise their antique cars. It is just a vehicle. It is nothing to be adored. Some people 'love' their motorbikes. In fact one very silly man 'loved' his motorbike so much he married it! Some men are buried with their motorcycles. Ancient Egyptians were buried with their chariots and other idols. Alcohol and cigarettes are often idols. It is a pathetic thing to see Christians standing outside a church, smoking. Truly, that cursed thing is their idol and it will in time destroy their life.

We hope what is written here will shake Christians out of their idolatry. There is hope for people who have inadvertently fallen into idolatry through being enticed by sin or through ignorance of what God expects. We can overcome this sin by committing ourselves afresh to God. We can have the victory in this fallen world. 'Whoever believes Jesus is the Messiah, is born of God. Whoever loves the Father also loves the Child who is born of Him. By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. His commandments are not grievous, for whoever is born of God overcomes the world. Your faith is the victory that has overcome the world. Who are they who overcome the world, but those who believe Jesus is the Son of God? This is Jesus Who came by water and blood. Not with the water only but with the water and the blood. It is the Holy Spirit who testifies because the Holy Spirit is the Truth. There are Three who testify; the Holy Spirit, the (purifying) water, and the (cleansing) blood and the Three agree as One. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is God's testimony concerning His Son ... Those who have the Son has the Life. Those who do not have God's Son do not have the Life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so you may know you have eternal life, and so you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God' (1 John 5:1 to 9, 12 & 13).

Amen and God bless you.

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