

Destroy the Idols and Experience Victory

Dear Friend,

Mention the word idol and immediately images of a golden calf, Baal or some other ancient idol comes to mind. The fact is idols are much more than that. They are cunning, subtle, coming in all sizes, shapes, and colors. They are as seductive as the woman described in Proverbs 7.

We are often tempted in the secular humanistic world we live in to invent “gods” that are projections of our own selfish plans and ambitions. These idols may not be wooden or metal idols, but instead the goals or things we chase after like money, power, fame or comfort. This results in creating God in our image rather than being an obedient people created in His image. As a result, we end up worshipping the things God made or gave us rather than God Himself. When this happens we are not able to, *“Grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God”* (Ephesians 3:18b-19)

If we are going to move forward into the great things God has in store for us, we must get rid of the idols in our lives. These idols will ruin our faith. After God told Jacob to arise and go to Bethel, *“Jacob told everyone in his household, “Get rid of all your pagan idols, purify yourselves, and put on clean clothing.”* (Genesis 35:2 NASB).

The only way I can get rid of these idols is through the freedom Jesus Christ provides. Right before the Lord is about to do a great work, I often feel this heavy burden in my spirit. It involves experiencing all the pressures of meeting the responsibilities of the present needs as new challenges are set before me.

At moments like that I can either accept the status quo, and struggle with the present problems, which frequently involve financial needs, ignoring the new challenges before me, or I can fall on my knees before God in prayer. When I do that the Lord will frequently tell me to do what He told Gideon to do in Judges 9:24-35.

Gideon’s challenge was to rally the children of Israel to defeat the Midianites and the Amalekites. Before he could do that, Gideon was told to build an altar before the Lord and name it the Lord of peace. Then he was to “pull down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah that is beside it” (v. 25).

God still wasn't through with Gideon. In Judges 7 we see that after removing the physical idols of Baal and the Asherah pole, God goes to work on what could be referred to as the idols of the heart. These are the idols of pride and self-confidence we believe will give us the victory.

Gideon was facing impossible odds. The Midianites and Amalekites had an army which was to the human mind overwhelming. *"The Lord said to Gideon, 'You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, saying, 'My own strength has saved me''"* (Judges 7:2).

Gideon's army is reduced to 300 men who blew their trumpets. "And when they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another (of the Midianites and Amalekites) even throughout the whole army; and the army fled."

Gideon, by removing the idols and trusting God saw a great and mighty victory.

If I am going to experience victory in overcoming the needs set before me I must first destroy the idols that exist in my life. Jesus made that clear when He said in Matthew 6:33 (ESV), "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

When this is done, not only am I getting rid of existing idols in my life, but it also causes me to see if what I am praying for is just another idol. So many prayers sent to God are requests for a new idol or the preservation of an existing one. That is why God must answer no to these prayers. He loves me too much to just keep giving me one idol after another every time I beg Him for such.

When I get rid of the idols in my life and put first the Kingdom of God, I am then free to hear the voice of Jesus and follow the directions He gives me.

In John 10:27 Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand."

It is by getting rid of the idols, putting first the Kingdom of God, and following Jesus, that I can experience victory both now and for all eternity.

Jonah after refusing to obey God and destroy the idols of self-interests in his life, ended up in a whale's belly in the bottom of the sea. It is there he comes to his senses and declares, "*Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head. I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to You, Into Your holy temple. Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness*" (Jonah 2:5-8 NASB).

The vain, worthless idols are marketed daily through one media source after another. This produces thorns in one's spirit which choke out the word of God. Jesus described this in His parable of the Sower and the seed when He said, "*And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection*" (Luke 8:14 ASV).

For that reason, John says in I John 5:21, "*Keep yourselves from idols*" (NKJV).

The Lord God Almighty commands that "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:4,5).

He is a jealous God because of the deep love He has for each and everyone of us. Yet we ignore His commands and like the children of Israel in Exodus 32:1 we are quick to create those idols of golden calves which we feel we can control. Even if we don't make physical idols, we are often guilty of trying to create God in our image. We mold him to fit our expectations, desires, and ambitions. Our prayers take on the form of MY Kingdom come rather than THY Kingdom come.

When we create a god in our minds that exists to just meet our self-centered desires, we end up worshipping ourselves rather than the God who created us. This self-worship leads to immorality, depression, and destruction. It keeps us from experiencing the victorious life God has for us.

I Corinthians 10:12-14 says, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.”

An idol is anything we put before God. Idols can be thoughts or desires. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Colossians 3:5,6 KJV).

Idolatry begins when people reject what they know about God. Instead of looking to Him as the creator and sustainer of life, they see themselves as the center of the universe. “Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles” (Romans 1:22-23 NLT).

Romans 1:24-32 (NIV) tells us what the end result of creating and worshipping self-made gods rather than the one true God is. “Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”

Paul clearly shows us what happens when people, “*exchange the glory of the uncorruptible God*” for their self-made idols. First, they reject God, and make a god in their image who agrees with everything they want and do. Then, they engage in sexual sin, greed, hatred, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slandering, become haters of God and much more. God didn’t cause this steady progression toward evil. Instead, when sinners reject Him, He allows them to live as they have chosen. Once caught in the downward spiral, their only hope exists in Jesus Christ who is “*the way, the truth and the life*” (John 14:2).

It is Jesus who through His death and resurrection has come to set us free from the idols that would enslave us. “*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*” (John 8:36). The freedom Jesus gives is not the freedom to do whatever we want. This only leads us further into the idolatry of self-centeredness and self-glorification.

Jesus gives us the freedom to follow Him into a suffering world to help others who are in need. It is in that world of pain that we can proclaim in word and deed, that there is HOPE, Christ is Risen!

“*So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God’s wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 5:21 NLT).

Now it is critical that through repentance, the idols would be removed from your life in order, “*that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to rasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us*” (Ephesians 3:16-20).

It is this power of the Holy Spirit that works within us, which destroys the idols. When this happens, we can experience the victory that our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gives us both now and for all eternity.

Yours in His Service,

Larry Rice

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Rice". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Larry Rice".