

“Fleeing Idolatry – Running to Jesus” / Beauty or Beast 5

“What is K9 mom?” Will said to Fran. Setting the scene, he was 6 and they were leaving school and a K9 Police unit was parked by the school. “What is a K9 mom” - was the question. To which Fran replied – go up and see. Will walked up to the window of the car and ... rrrrrrrrr!!!! A large German Shepherd jumped on the window and barked ferociously sending Will backwards and Fran laughing. 14 years later, whenever anyone in our family sees a K9 Unit we say, “Hey Will – what is K9?” To this day he swears he needs counseling. We laugh – but he had no idea that K9 meant - scary dog on the other side of the window **Today God is going to beg and plead as he commands us – flee from idolatry.** And I think many of us –if not most of us – would respond like Will – “What is idolatry?” We don’t think we have an idol in our house I worship or a temple of gods we go to. So why is God so passionate about this? Does this really apply to me? The answer is yes.

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 14xs in the NT, God warns those he loves flee from idols / false gods. 30+ specific warnings in OT & many stories & it is the first two commands of the ten commandments to His people. Exodus 20:3-4 (ESV) [1] 3 “You shall have no other gods before me. [2] 4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them. **The most talked about sin in all the bible – idolatry.** Idolatry is not a cultural phenomena of ancient history – rather it is a contemporary reality that plagues the soul of every person and always has. Today we want to answer one main question ...

How do we flee from idolatry? To do this we need to understand what is idolatry and why it fills the bible.

01. What is idolatry?
02. Why is idolatry so dangerous to us and horrendous to God?
03. How do we flee from idolatry?

01. What is idolatry? Idolatry affects BELIEVERS and unbelievers. This passage is addressed as a warning to the bride.

I Cor 10:1-4 (ESV) 1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 & all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 & all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

I Corinthians 10:6-7 (ESV) 6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 **Do not be idolaters as some of them were:** We are **constantly & consistently** moved toward sin/evil by idolatry.

Idolatry – (lit.) to serve idols or false gods.

Idolatry - The giving of our affection, time, and resources to something that promises to give us what we desire that is opposed to God's desires for us.

With an idol: we listen to it, give to it, hope in it, and even begin to enjoy it more than Almighty God.

What are my idols – your idols? The issue is not the object – it is our heart that longs to find joy in everything but God.

Idols - Any created thing that begins to capture our heart and move us to seek our own sinful desires.

Vs 7-8 – Idols can come in a religious or godly looking package

I Cor 10:7-9 (ESV) 7 as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, 9 We must not put Christ to the test, ... From Ex 32:6 – At Mt Sinai after being rescued from Egyptian slavery, the people get anxious for Moses has been gone a long time up the mountain. They are afraid – want to be safe, comfortable, and not in the wild. So they sought out a god they could touch and worship as they wished and made a golden calf. They gave their money (gold), their time (they took 2-3 whole days), and their affection – they fell at the feet of these gold idols. In a short time, they distorted the true God that brought them out of Egypt and believed part of worshiping Him involved - sexual immorality. They used God to create new ways to get their desires.

We can make our ministry or our particular passion (evangelism, caring for the poor) an idol. When this thing gets our affection over Christ and we begin to use it to serve us (put Christ to the test) – give us hope, give us identity, fill us up – it becomes an idol 30 yrs ago, we had a couple in our student ministry who was having marital problems. We came alongside, loved, & eventually asked them to stop serving for a while so they could work on their marriage. They were good till we asked them to step down: they became furious. Why? That’s what I thought? Just want to help. Their marriage was embarrassing – yes, but when they lost their position in the ministry they lost their identity and it crushed them. It had become an idol even though it was supposed to be a ministry to God. Their anger and hurt they dealt to many over the next few weeks matched the way they had mistreated each other in the months and years before we intervened.

I Corinthians 10:10 (ESV) nor grumble, as some of them did... Elyse Fitzpatrick, a female writer who has helped me grow a ton in the gospel and this area of idols said, “One of the best ways to unearth your idols is to see what causes you to consistently grumble – get down, defeated, and complaining.” Elyse Fitzpatrick

What are your idols? *Specific things can be idols – Cardinals, kids, job* *General ideas can be idols – happiness, success, control, comfort.* What consistently gets you defeated! Hard to see what's an idol just looking at what we enjoy. God almost everything on this earth for us to enjoy – and reflect that back to him as praise. Where we get consistently crushed. This reveals what has become supreme. **Whenever anything terminates on itself – it is becoming an idol. All things were meant to take our eyes back to God to say – you are the Greatest!**
We will get back to how we identify idols. If we are to flee idols, it is just as important that we grasp ...

02. Why is idolatry so dangerous to us and horrendous to God?

I Corinthians 10:14-22 (ESV) 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

*United by faith in his person and work - **we are one with Christ.** His body and blood unite us. We are his bride united with Him. We have been bought and united to him by His life and death – that now gives us life with God!*

*But when we engage in idolatry – we are **not just** pursuing sin, or our evil desires as vs 6 says. Something much more deadly to us and painful to Almighty God is happening.*

*18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? 19 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. *I do not want you to be participants with demons.**

***Behind every false god are demons – whether we realize it or not.** 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?*

*Imagine Fran my wife walking into dinner one night – Will and Cade and I are at the table and she says – hey everyone, I want you all to meet Theophilus my boyfriend. (I used that name so you know this is an illustration). She says, “I don’t want to leave you John – I just want him too. I can imagine that wouldn’t go over well with my boys 0 it would hurt them deeply and I can guarantee you it wouldn’t fly with me! Why? You can’t be devoted to one in marriage – and give yourself to another –without hurting everyone involved. That is unfaithful. Hear our God - **When we are living in idolatry - we are being unfaithful to God. Idolatry is unfaithfulness to God.***

My response to this announcement from Fran. I would be deeply hurt. And then I would throw Theophilus outside and tell him – we are going a couple of rounds to settle this. I’m fighting for her because she is mine.

Jealousy: wanting & acting to keep that what is yours. Envy: bad! God being jealous for us is good as it says in vs 22!

*God’s response: **Discipline** – He does not remove us from the marriage. He does not disown us – or remove our forgiveness. We do not lose relationship – when we are unfaithful. Brandon taught on this 2 weeks ago. His faithfulness is based on Christ’s work that has adopted us to eternal son/daughter status. Our relationship is based on his faithfulness – not ours. But he does discipline. He did this to the children of Israel – voicing his displeasure and hate for their sin – but his love for them.*

*I Corinthians 10:4-5 (ESV) 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. He was displeased bc they were participating with demons. **The lover we unite with when we are unfaithful to God not matter the idol – demons. The damage – is not just to us but the body around us, our family – and most of all to God’s name that we defame before all.** So God pleads ...*

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

03. How do we flee from idolatry?

*I Cor 10:14 / **Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.** Lit. - run far from so you can’t see it.*

Brandon has told this story a few times here – about the “gun man” at our first offices near Trigg BH. How we all fled in fear of death, but I want you to hear my short version. Everyone ran by. I was under a table. I hear doors flying, people running and then an explosion. (back in my brain – I heard, “He’s got a gun.” At that point – I didn’t sit & listen, I didn’t hide, I didn’t try and negotiate – I wanted to get as far a way - flee. I climbed through a window and lept off the balcony of the second floor. I then fled in my sandals across the parking lot, across the street, behind a strip mall – 150 yards away.– I fled far away bc I believed death was eminent and life was not here. This is what it means to flee.1) First thought on how do we flee idolatry – it means get far, far away from it! How?

*I Corinthians 10:12 (ESV) **Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.***

Pride says – I don't have idols, or I can step aside from this or even worse – I can tame this.

Siegfried and Roy were popular illusionists who worked with White Lions and Tigers in their Vegas act. One big cat named Montecore did over 2000 shows with them. Then on Oct 3, 2003 – Montecore attacked Roy Horn and almost killed him. He is still partially paralyzed from the attack. A 233 pg report was filed on the why of the attack exploring several conspiracy theories and it reached no conclusion. A few years later, a spokesman for the world famous San Diego Zoo said – this is what wild animals do. You cannot tame them. No matter what your pride says, You cannot tame idols! What then-

Living in humility allows God to out our idols and destroy them.

Pride gets defensive – it hides our unfaithfulness by ignoring the deeper issue of why we sin (idols). In your head you will want to say – I just make a few mistakes. Why is God so intense about this? Dancing with demons is not making a few mistakes. Defaming God and presenting him as a beast and hurting the body– is not a small thing. *We brought church discipline two times against a brother, a best friend, a staff member. Twice there was some repentance – but it was never full or complete and I knew this and I let the process end bc of my sin. It was the third time – without repentance that we had to let him go. The pain, the hurt was huge. It took several years and a lot of humility bc of what happened for God to show me that it was an idol of comfort that kept me from allowing the process to be completed. My idol worship which led to sin – hurt many and defamed God's name. Please, hear me – all sin is based in idolatry and when we don't let God root it out – it will hurt many and most of all make God and his bride a beast.* Humility must be the position of your heart if you want to know the idols you dance with, hurting yourself, others, and God.

God follows this call to humility with a promise concerning how we are to live in this humility.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. *Taken out of context – this is a verse we use to say God will help us avoid sin.*

1) This is not just about a way to stop A SIN. Stopping sins – does not kill idols – or let you flee them.

That is attacking the symptoms – like giving a Tylenol to a cancer victim.

2) God promises he is providing the way of escape against idolatry. What is this way?

Listen to humility in action through a sinFULL man (David) who wrestled with idolatry – while being a man after God's own heart. Ps 139 was written in the battle against idolatry. Last 2 verses summarize how we flee

Psalms 139:23-24 (ESV) 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

1) Search and test me – to reveal my idols.

- Look at where my hope, my affections, my thoughts, and my resources are going! (search)
- Go past my sin to the source – the why? (know) *Iceberg – what's on top (sins/symptoms) below - idol*
- Allow trials and crises to reveal my idols. (try)

God is not saying in 1 Cor 10:13. I will not give you more than you can handle in this life. Testing is giving you more than you can handle for a purpose – in this case to reveal deadly and defaming idols.

- Show me if I'm being unfaithful to you, putting anything before you – that is grieving and defaming you, and hurting others and me. (grievous way)

Psalms 129:24 (ESV) ... and lead me in the way everlasting! *Just revealing does not destroy. We cannot – what does?*

2) Lead me to the way – that destroys my idols and gives me life!

What is this way? **John 14:6 (ESV)** I am the way ...

JESUS! It is not a what – but a who?

Want to flee idolatry – we must run to Jesus and find him far GREATER than what we had put before Him. We are not asking God to search, try, and know us because we think we are faithful. Rather, we are asking this because we know He is faithful. Humility says – I know I am full of sin and worship idols. In the gospel – God says you are sinFULL. The cross has outed all of us. But the great news of the gospel – is Jesus has covered our sin. So – now, we can run to Jesus and say expose my unfaithfulness and as he does – we are not heaped in shame or guilt – but rather we are engulfed in the love of God because we see He remains faithful and loves us even as our idols are exposed. The last truth of David's prayer – says this – lead me in the way everlasting. Jesus is beautiful – but he is also powerful. He is faithful to receive us – this is beautiful. But he is also faithful to destroy the idols he outs. The power that raised him – can destroy our idols and it happens through love.

The Cross – exposes the Beast of our idolatry and the Beauty and Power of Jesus – moving us to run to Him!

1 Corinthians 10:16 (ESV) The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?

Fleeing from idolatry:

Daily ask God to reveal our idols – the truth of how they destroy us and defame God.

(prayer, gospel truth in the Word, other believers)

Believe and taste the faithful love of Jesus - thru all our unfaithfulness.

Our affection for Jesus will grow and we will begin to run to Jesus as we see Him destroy our idols.