



“Guard Yourselves from Idols”
1 John 5:21
Perfect Love: The Book of 1 John

Introduction:

“Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.” (2 John 1:12)

“I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.” (3 John 1:13-15)

“Little children, guard yourselves from idols.” (1 John 5:21)

Pithy Point #1 - We are little children of God

We do not get to think, act, and talk like those who do not know God as their Heavenly Father.

Pithy Point #2 - We need to guard ourselves from idolatry

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

The City of Ephesus was a center of paganism and idolatry (The Temple of Dian/Artemis and the altar to the “unknown god” (Acts 17:23)

John recognizes that the single greatest threat to their faith then and ours today is personal idolatry!!

I. The Definition of Idolatry

Exodus 20:1-5 Then God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. 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...”

Habakkuk 2:18 “What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols.”

Isaiah 2:8 “Their land has also been filled with idols; they worship the work of their hands, that which their fingers have made.”

- An idol is anything that stands between man and God...i.e., that takes His place.
- Anything that we love, treasure, prioritize or look to find fulfillment other than God Himself is an idol in our hearts and lives.
- Idolatry is the worship of anything other than God, as though it were God.
- Idolatry is making even a good thing the ultimate thing.

II. The Examples of Idolatry Not all idols are made of gold...

Here in 1 John we have talked about the

- the idolatry of holding a false view of Christ
- the idolatry of not fellowshiping with other Christians
- the idolatry of not loving others
- the idolatry of disobedience
- the idolatry of the lust of flesh, lust of the eyes, boastful pride of life (sex, money, power)
- the idolatry of the antichrists who deny the faith and set themselves up to be worshiped.

Other Lists of Idolatrous Practices (cf. Colossians 3; Galatians 5; etc.)

In 1 Peter 4:3 the apostle Peter describes those who “...pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.”

Modern day idolatry is alive and well because it lives within all of our hearts!

Jeremiah 17:9-10 “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.”

Hosea 4:12 “For a spirit of harlotry has led them astray, and they have played the harlot, departing from their God.”

Jeremiah 17:5 “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh (self-pride) his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord.”

Ezekiel 23:49 “...you will bear the penalty of worshiping your idols; thus you will know that I am the Lord God.”

Jonah 2:8 “Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness...” (NASB)

Jonah 2:8 “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s love for them.” (NIV)

III. Dealing With Personal Idolatry

1 John 5:21 “Little children, guard yourselves from idols.” The word *guard* gives the image of a warfare...

What’s your golden calf?

Step #1 - Ask God to expose our personal idols, especially the hidden ones.

Psalm 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.”

Ezekiel 14:4 “Any man...who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols...”

Step #2 - Run from any future idolatrous practices and idolatrous people.

Acts 15:29 “...abstain from things sacrificed to idols...if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well.”

1 Corinthians 10:14 “Therefore, flee from idolatry”

1 Corinthians 15:11 “But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”

cf. Psalm 1:1-3

Step #3 - Realize that God has intended for His children to only worship Him.

Ezekiel 16:9 “...how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols...”

1 John 5:21 “Little children, guard (i.e., keep) yourselves from idols.”

Conclusion: “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.” (Winston Churchill)

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS:

1. What is the difference between virtual idolatry and personal idolatry?
2. What is an idol?
3. Name some of the idols you especially need to guard yourself against at this time in your life.
4. In what specific way was studying 1 John good for you?
5. Name a particular passage or subject in 1 John that was especially helpful.
6. Place on your calendar when you will read all of 1 John again.