

ALTERNATIVE IDOLS

“Tear down your father’s altar to Baal,” God said to him, “and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.” —JUDGES 6:25

The word ‘Baal’ means master, and more frighteningly, ‘possessor’. It applies to a variety of manmade images believed to have supernatural power. Throughout the pagan world, the Baal cults had huge followings, which challenged the worship of God by seducing the Israelites for most of their history. That serves as a warning for us today as to how easy it is to adopt the gods of our time.

Many of us get so caught up in the cultural norms of society today that we actually embrace its gods. We can become driven by one or more of many things: pride, money, reputation, materialism, sex, power, body image, work and even food. John Calvin wrote, “The human mind is a perpetual factory of idols.” In his book “Counterfeit Gods”, Tim Keller says, “Idols are spiritual addictions that can lead to terrible evil.” He cites this example: “Money can become so much more than money. It can become a powerful, life-altering, culture-shaping god that makes us do what we would not normally do. And it eventually breaks the hearts of its worshippers.”

There are many who once embraced the gospel, but have sidelined God because of doubts, which have presented themselves as intellectual questions. It’s good to pursue them, but often the root of doubt is not intellectual, but moral. They usually want what God forbids, and will either recognize that and turn from it, or they get rid of God. It is into this vacuum of unwillingness to trust God that idols find their way into

our lives. When we're not engaging in the things of God at all, we can be sure more idols will present themselves.

If we are allowing the material things of this world to engage and dominate our lives, we are living in spiritual poverty, which ultimately leads to dissatisfaction and ruin. Getting rid of idols isn't always easy. Their roots can go very deep and it's often a process, but one in which we have the Lord's strength to work through. Before any change can take place externally, we have to deal with the internal by allowing the Holy Spirit to expose the idols that have become barriers to experiencing God and confess them.

Christ indwells us, not as an addition to anything, but so that He may be Lord of our lives. He is all the resource we need, and if we've set up alternative idols in our lives, we need Him that much more. Our security does not lie in the 'Baals' of this world, but in Jesus Christ alone. He is our strength and all we need do is trust Him.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, temptation is all around us. Keep me firmly rooted in You, Lord. That's all I need. Thank You.

TO REFLECT UPON: Are there idols in my life I need to repent of?