

Modern Idolatries?

Now Showing in Our Own Backyards!

by Chaplain Frank Wm Nagy

Idolatry May Seem Distant to Us, Moderns But It's Closer Than We Think!

How do we look at our sports cars, houses, etc., etc. and etc.? It seems the majority of us have *a multitude of things we hold more dear than God*.

1 Corinthians 10:5 God was not well pleased with many of them: for they were **destroyed** in the wilderness...⁷ Do not be *idolaters*, as some of them were...¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples. **Their stories are written for our admonition...**¹² *So let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

How Does Idolatry Show Up Today?

Self Focus, Serving Our Own Desires, Easily Leads to Idolatry

Hosea 10:1 Israel is an empty vine, he *brings forth fruit unto himself*: according to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land *they have made a goodly number of images [idols]*.² Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty. He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.

Philippians 3:18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, now I tell you even weeping, that they are the *enemies of the cross of Christ*.¹⁹ Their end is **destruction**, whose *god is their belly* and whose glory is in their **shame**, who set their minds on earthly things.)

2 Timothy 3:2 Men shall be *lovers of themselves...*⁴ *...lovers of pleasures* more than lovers of God.

Atheism is a Form of Foolish and Idolatrous Self-Focus

Psalms 14:1 The **fool** has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done *abominable works*, there is none that does **good**.

(The atheist, in his foolish conceit, elevates himself to position of final Judge of all things. Discounting God in this way is merely another form of *self-worship*.)

Logic and Intellectualism are Bigger Problems among Christians than Most Think

Have you ever heard the term *Bible-idolatry*? This is where study of Scripture becomes a god in itself. Scholars who are most skilled become the priests of a skewed legalistic religion. Scholarship becomes so important that the Spirit of the Word is often lost. Scholars, in this situation, forget that "the letter of the Law kills only the Spirit gives life

(2 Corinthians 3:6).” Bible principles get elevated above the Living Word, Who daily speaks to all Christians and identifies how to apply his word to our specific situations.

Logic Often is an Intellectual’s god

Isaiah 28:9 Whom shall [the prophet] teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? those weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

:10 **For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.**

:11 With stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. :12 To whom He said, This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.

Yet, they would not hear. :13 Instead, the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;

This was so they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The strident voices we hear in Isaiah 28:9-10 are men dedicated to learning. The only problem is they wish to dictate the method they will use to absorb teachings. These mockers reject the message of God’s prophet, as “*too simple and child-like.*” They prefer their own logical approach over what God had spoken. Yet, God was not about to bend to satisfy their prideful, worldly wisdom. God adds insult to their injured feelings in verses 11-12. He will not stop at speaking truths simply, but use additional foolish means to speak to this people. He will continue to call them to rest, yet they will not hear. They have so preferred their own way of doing things they will keep their own way of wisdom. The results? They will miss the things of God so badly, that they will be destroyed.

Jesus had a Couple of Words for Idolatrous Intellectuals of His Day

Matthew 15:8 This people draws near me with their mouth. It honors me with their lips; but *their heart is far from Me.* 9 ***They worship Me in vain, teaching commandments of men, as doctrines.***

John 5:39 Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life. These testify of me, :40 yet you will not come to me, that you might have life.

The Word of God Shows a Great Difference in Approach to Wisdom

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean unto your own understanding. :6 In all your ways acknowledge him and He shall direct your paths. :7 Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the LORD and depart from evil.

Those not practicing the words of Proverbs 3 will find themselves going their own way. If we remain in charge, where is God? Isaiah He first? Or even considered in

our personal plans? Do we become like those James took to task in his letter? James wrote:

James 4:13 Go to now, you that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: :14 Whereas you do not know what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes. :15 Instead you ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. :16 But now you rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

How Does a Perfectionist's Religion Work?

Even if we approach the true God with "our righteousness based on our works" we make ourselves holy by another path than God approves. The results are not pretty:

What happens to the **perfectionist** in terms of religion? Tragically enough, he transfers his perfectionism onto his relationship with God, who is now seen as a figure on top of a tall ladder. He says to himself, "I'm going to climb up to God now..."

So he starts climbing, rung-by-rung, working so hard, until his knuckles are bleeding and his shins are bruised. Finally he reaches the place where he perceived God was only to find his god has moved up three rungs; so he climbs and struggles, but when he gets there, his god has gone up another three rungs.

-- David A. Seamands, **Healing for Damaged Emotions** p. 16.

What Can Happen When We Consider Others Too Highly?

Careful! putting a person on a pedestal might just *make that person your idol*. Put a man or woman on a pedestal and he or she is sure to get knocked off of it.

It is an Error to Seek Honor and Praise More from Men than from God

Psalms 89:6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? **who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the LORD?**

Luke 6:26 Woe to you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

John 5:41 [Jesus said] "I do not receive honor from men. :42 But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. :43 I am come in my Father's name, yet you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. :44 How can you believe, who receive honor one from another, and yet **you do not seek the honor that comes only from God?**"

John 12:42 ...Many among the chief rulers also believed on [Jesus], but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: :43 For **they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.**

Fans – Fanatics: Watch Out Who Your Idols Are

Beware whom you follow. In the U.S. we have *idolized* movie stars, musicians and sports figures. What does the Bible say about doing that?

Proverbs 12:11 ...He that follows *vain persons* is void of understanding.

God promises those that venerate any kind of “*idol*” will become like what they worship:

Psalms 115:4 Their *idols* are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. 8 *Those that make them are like them; and so is everyone that trusts in them.*

The Easy to Make Mistake of Loving Family Members More than God

Another form of *idolatry* occurs *when we hold family members in higher esteem than God*:

Matthew 10:37 Jesus said, “*He that loves father or mother more than me* is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

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Luke 14:26 Jesus said, “If any man come to me, and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

Ancestor worship is one of the greatest *idolatrous* strongholds that remain basically unchallenged even today. We might tend to think this is only continues in ancient societies like those of China and Japan. However, Freemasons invite the power of their *revered dead spirits* into themselves.

Christians Must Love God Enough to Abstain from Marrying Unbelievers

Malachi 2:11 Judah has dealt treacherously. An abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has *profaned the holiness of the LORD* which he loved, and has *married the daughter of a strange god*. 12 Be he master or scholar or he that offers an offering unto the LORD of hosts, the LORD will cut off the man that does this out of the tabernacles of Jacob. 13 And this you have done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that He does not regard the offering any more, nor or receive it with good will at your hand....

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and *what communion has light with darkness?* 15 What concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he who believes with an infidel?

16 *What agreement has the temple of God with idols?* for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, “**I will dwell in them, and walk in them.** I will be their God and they shall be my people. 17 So come out from among them. Be separate,” says the Lord, “Do not touch *the unclean thing* and I will receive you. 18 I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.

Alliances / Business Partnerships with the Ungodly and Unrighteous, Dishonor God

2 Chronicles 19:2 Jehu the son of Hanani, the seer, went out to meet king Jehoshaphat and said, “Should you *help the ungodly* and *love those that hate the LORD*? Therefore wrath from the LORD is upon you.”

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and *what communion has light with darkness?* 15 What concord has Christ with *Belial*? or what part has he who believes with an infidel?

God Says: Adultery, Fornication and Harlotry Are Aspects of Idolatry

Judges 2:17 They would not hearken to their judges, but *they went whoring after other gods*, and bowed themselves unto them. They turned quickly out of the way...

1 Corinthians 5:11 ...I have written unto you not to keep company with any man called a brother who is a *fornicator*.... Do not even eat with such a one.

1 Corinthians 6:13 ...The body is not for **fornication**, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body....15 Do you not know your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I take the members of Christ and **make them the members of a harlot**? God forbid. 16 What? Do you not know he who is **joined to a harlot** is one body with her? “For two,” said He, “shall be one flesh.” 17 One joined to the Lord is one spirit. 18 Flee **fornication**. Every sin a man does is outside the body, but he who commits **fornication** sins against his own body. 19 What? Do you not know your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you from God, so you are not your own? 20 You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

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1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you know you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man defile the temple of God, God shall **destroy** him...

Ephesians 5:3 Do not let *fornication* and **uncleanness** even be named among you, as becomes saints.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from *fornication*.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but *whoremongers* and **adulterers** God will judge.

**Oops! Our Great American Pastime is a Form of Idolatry:
Keeping Up with the Joneses is Rooted in Covetousness**

Deuteronomy 5:21 Neither shall you desire your neighbor's wife, neither shall you covet your neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is your neighbor's. (Also found recorded in Exodus 20:17.)

Ephesians 5:3 Do not let...**covetousness**, even be named among you, as becomes saints.... 5 You know, no... **covetous** man, who is an **IDOLATER**, has any inheritance in **the kingdom of Christ and of God**.

Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members upon the earth.... [Keep clear of things like] **covetousness, which is idolatry**.*

* The drive for prosperity has lead some to the most heinous of acts, like **abortion**:

Like Abortion, Human Sacrifice to Idols Killed Children

This God-less Response Promises Prosperity Due to One Less Mouth to Feed

Leviticus 18:21 You shall not let any of *your seed pass through the fire to Molech [an idol]*, neither shall you profane [**blaspheme**] the Name of your God. I am the LORD.#

“Passing your seed through the fire” describes a gristly method of *human sacrifice*. They fired up their metal *idol* to a roasting temperature, then placed infants into the statue’s waiting arms.

Other references you may wish to look at are Leviticus 20:1-5 and Psalms 106:36-38.

...And It Doesn’t End When We Have Obtained What We Sought

Isaiah 2:8 Their land also is full of *idols*. *They worship the work of their own hands*, which their own fingers have made.

Our continued efforts, keeping our sports cars shining and our houses immaculate with the finest furnishings, betray obsessive resolve. We massage and flaunt what we have obtained. It seems the majority of us maintain *a multitude of things we hold more dear than God*.

Now let us consider those things that may not rival God for first-place, yet provide conflict as they place close seconds.

God Will Not Accept Worship as One God Among Others

What does Exodus 20:3 really say and mean?

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me (KJV).

Alternative Translation:

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods beside Me (RSV).

If we will analyze the Hebrew we will see that the Revised Standard Version gives us a more correct understanding. It's really not only having no gods before him, but "not having any *beside* him."

Deuteronomy 32:39 See now that I, even I, am He. There is **no god with me**: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can **deliver** out of my hand."

The Prophet Samuel also expressed this in one of his prayers:

2 Samuel 7:21 For Your word's sake, and according Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. :22 So You are great, O LORD God: **There is none like You, neither is there any God beside You**, according to all that we have heard with our ears. :23 What one nation in the earth is like your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a Name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for Your land, before Your people, which You redeemed to Yourself from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? :24 For You have confirmed to Yourself Your people Israel to be a people unto You forever. You, LORD, have become their God.

The Prophet Isaiah of the Old Testament confirms this understanding:

Isaiah 42:8 I am the LORD: that is My Name. **My glory will I not give to another**, neither My praise to graven images.

Isaiah 43:10 ...Understand that I am He: **Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me**. :11 I, even I, am the LORD. **Beside Me there is no Savior**.

Isaiah 44:6 Thus says the LORD the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts. **I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God**. :8 ...**Isaiah there a God beside Me? No, there is no God...**

Isaiah 45:5 **I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me....** :18 ...**I am the LORD; and there is none else**. :21 ...**There is no God else beside Me**; a just God and a Savior. **There is none beside Me**. :22 Look to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth. **I am God, and there is none else**.

Isaiah 46:9 ...**I am God, and there is none else. I am God, and there is none like Me...**

As we can see, Isaiah took a lot of time to record God explaining how He alone is God and that there is no one else anything like him.

Jesus Said It, Too!

Matthew 4:10 Jesus told Satan, "Get away from me, Satan. For it is written, '***You shall worship the Lord your God, and HIM ONLY shall you serve.***'"

At the same time we wish to consider the claims of a Jew, who was rejected by the political powers that existed in his time. He was thought to be a bastard and thus one, who would have been disenfranchised by Jewish culture and religion. He was finally put to death under the false accusation that he blasphemed God, who he called his Father. The death he died was calculated to silence his followers; as anyone who was executed by hanging on a tree was supposed to never be spoken of again. Yet, this man and his closest followers claimed he was the chosen Messiah and as such was the Son of God with all the accompanying accolades that were to be afforded the Eternal God of the Universe. Some still think of him as merely a good man, but as he claimed to be God, he either had to be evil or insane. Things he did during his short tenure as a prophetic human being among us showed none of the signs of either scandal. Jesus is the human face of the God Paul came to believe and stated was the One, who would judge all men, who choose to ignore him when He reveals himself.

God, the Father, has shown his support of his Son in doing miracles at his hands and at the hands of his supporters ever since. Peter made claim along with signs of power that Jesus was the only name given under heaven that could save (Acts 4:12). Paul said in Philippians 2:5-11, that everyone would one day confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Compare these statements with the Old Testament claims we mentioned before in Isaiah 43:10-13; 45:21-22 and 45:23-24. There you will remember that God said He alone could save, and was the One to whom every knee would bow. The only answer is plain. New Testament writers believed Jesus was one Lord with the God of the Old Testament.)

The early Romans and the people of their empire would have had no problem with Christianity had Christians considered Jesus a lord among *many lords the peoples worshiped*. Christians only became a threat, because they insisted: "Jesus is the only **Lord!**"

Several Sins are Expressions of Idolatry

1 Samuel 15:23 ...**Stubbornness** is [the same] as iniquity and *idolatry*."

Romans 1:26 For *this cause* [due to their **IDOLATRY**] God gave them up unto vile [read that "**unnatural**"] **affections**... 28 Even as *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge*, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do things not convenient. 29 Being filled with all **unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, [gossips], 30 Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,**³¹ **Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.**³² Who, knowing the judgment of God, that those who commit such things are worthy of **death**, not only do the same, but have pleasure in those who do them.

Ephesians 5:5 ...[A] **covetous man** is an **IDOLATER**...

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Colossians 3:5 ...**covetousness, which is idolatry**:

Philippians 3:18 ...**Enemies of the cross of Christ**. 19 Their end is destruction, whose **god is their belly**... who pay attention to earthly [human, rather than spiritual] things.

2 Timothy 3:2 ...**Lovers of themselves**... 4 ...**lovers of pleasures** more than *lovers of God*.

God's Word Warned About the Fruit of Idolatry

Revelations 21:8 The fearful and unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, **idolaters**, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Even Some of God's Best Saints Fell into Blatant Idolatry

1 Kings 11:4 When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods. His heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites.... ⁸ ...for all his strange wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed to their gods. ⁹ The LORD was angry with Solomon, because **his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel**, who had appeared to him twice. 10 He had commanded him he should not go after other gods [**IDOLATRY**], but he did not keep what the LORD commanded.

So Beware of Being or Becoming Idolatrous

1 Corinthians 10:5 God was not well pleased with many of them: for they were **destroyed** in the wilderness.... ⁷ Do not be **idolaters**, as were some of them... ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples. *Their stories are written for our admonition...* ¹² **So let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**

Hebrews 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God**. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be **hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**. 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; 15 While it is said, Today if you will hear his voice, **do not harden your hearts**, as in the provocation.