

## *AN IDOL'S AFFECT ON OUR AFFECTIONS*

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**INTRODUCTION** — In my reading of the Scriptures, I have noticed that the Bible has as much to say about one's internal life toward God as it does external deeds. Idols thwart the affections of the New Testament Priest, preventing us from worshiping in spirit and truth. Jesus is to be the supreme object of our love and devotion, therefore we must remove all idols.

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### **I. DEFINING IDOLATRY**

- A. **THE DEFINITION:** *Any created thing that fleshly desires or demonic powers have turned into a primary object of devotion or hinders wholehearted love for God.*
- B. **THE DIFFERENT IDOLS:** Idols are not images of silver and gold or evil in and of themselves, but they are anything that may steal our wholehearted love from God:
1. *Family & Relationships* — Our nuclear, immediate, and extended families, as well as our friendships and romantic relationships, are of great significance. Yet, if we are following Jesus, they cannot be the primary object of our affections (Lk 14:26).
  2. *Money* — The accumulation of wealth (or the lack thereof) can twist one's affections and vie for one's allegiance/obedience. The Bible is very clear about the Christian's relationship with money and finances (Matt 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10).
  3. *Food* — Eating and drinking are not bad in and of themselves. When our bellies become our god, we enter into idolatry of food (Jn 6; Phil 3:19). If our bellies are the grid for our obedience, it is evident food has been exalted above Jesus.
  4. *Government/Politics* — Some have a stronger allegiance to a certain political party than to the Lord Jesus. We are commanded to honor and obey our governing authorities, but not bow to them in wholehearted devotion (Dan 3, 6; Rom 13).
  5. *Education/Philosophies* — Growing in the knowledge of various sciences (if not guarded by the Holy Spirit) can inflame one's pride and corrupt their affections toward God, trapping them in certain theologies or philosophies (Jn 5:39; 1 Cor 2).
  6. *Technology* — This can range from phones, computers, cars, television, video games, and social media. Though God has given us the ability to build, create, and innovate, these advances cannot be the focus of our trust (Ps 20:7; Isa 30:1-2).
  7. *Cultural Ideologies* — This can be fashion, music, social trends, or personalities. Many will compromise their convictions to show themselves approved by the world's standards, making current cultural trends their god (Rom 12:1).
  8. *Activities* — This can range from work, sports, ministry, community activities, or hobbies. The busyness of life oftentimes thwarts our affections toward God and turns our attention to the things of the world (Ps 27:4; Lk 10:42).

## II. FOUR DIMENSIONS OF DEVOTION

- A. **EMOTIONS:** Our emotions consist of what we feel: happiness, sadness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust, loneliness, jealousy, etc. Idols will affect the governance (leadership), influence (development), and reliance (dependency) of our emotional life. Most of all, an idol will affect the way we think that God *feels* about us.
- B. **THOUGHTS:** Our thoughts can be defined as the activity that takes place in the mind. An idol will affect our imagination (creativity), fascination (reality), and calculation (management). An idol will establish thought patterns that are contrary to Heaven's. Most of all, an idol will affect the way that we think that God *thinks* about us.
- C. **DESIRES:** Our desires speak of what we long for as well as what we pursue. Idols cannot and will not last and their end is destruction, therefore if we desire an idol, we long for death itself. An idol will greater hinder one's desire for God and their pursuit of Him. Most of all, an idol will affect the way we think God *desires* and *pursues* us.
- D. **TRUST:** Ultimately, when an idol attains our affections, it will also gain our trust. Though trust in an idol may not be a blatant confession, an idol's grip on one's affections is revealed when the trials of life arise and a cry for salvation is released. Idols may bring temporary comfort in trials but are unable to save to the uttermost.

## III. THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

- A. **THE JEALOUS GOD:** After God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, He brought them to Mount Sinai and spoke to them from the mountain (Exod 19-20). The first utterances of His thundering voice prohibited any form of idolatry (Exod 20:3-4). God is a jealous God, and will not share His glory nor His praise with an idol (Isa 42:8).
- B. **THE PROMISE:** The Law that Moses brought to the Israelites was never able to touch their hearts, it never changed their affections. Therefore, God in His jealousy, issued a promise through the prophets that He would change their affections by writing His Law upon their hearts through the Holy Spirit (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27).
- C. **THE GREATER MOSES:** In the same way that Moses ascended Mount Sinai to bring the Law to the Israelites, so also Jesus, the greater Moses, ascended to the right hand of the Father to pour out the Spirit (Jn 15:26, 16:7). Now, with the Spirit in our hearts, we have the love of God in us, empowering us to love Him wholeheartedly (Rom 5:5).
- D. **THE GREAT COMMANDMENT:** It is by God's Spirit that we are empowered to love Him (Deut 6:4-5; Matt 22:37; 1 Jn 4:7-14). In Christ, we are now under a different regime: grace (Rom 6:14). Therefore, the passions that once enslaved us have been rendered powerless in comparison to the surpassing power that dwells in us. Yet, if we do not guard our hearts, we become susceptible to fall back into idolatry, of which John, the apostle of love, warned his disciples about (1 Jn 5:18-21).