

The Counterfeit Christ of Alcohol & Drugs

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Idols of the Heart

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Well, you know the old story: the Israelites had been in bondage for 400 years, in bondage to Pharaoh, in bondage to Egypt, in bondage to the idols and to the gods of Egypt but then Pharaoh caused them to make bricks without hay, bricks without straw and they cried out to the Lord in bondage. Their oppression and their slavery became almost too much to bear and so they cried out to God and really, there's only one way out of slavery and that's to be delivered. So, God gave them a deliverer, Moses. And Moses was to carry them out of the Egypt and bring them into the Promised Land but before they would enter into the Promised Land, there was a season of trial, a season of testing, a season of wilderness. And like all people, they wanted the Promised Land to come a little bit sooner than God intended. They desired the leeks and the vegetables and the delicacies of Egypt and God was taking his sweet and precious time as far as they were concerned.

So, tensions built to a head in this story as Moses, the deliverer, is up at the top of Mount Sinai. What is God going to do? Are we going to be brought into the Promised Land? Can he deliver all of those things that we desire? He was taking his time and the people grew restless and impatient. So, what did they do? They turned to an idol. They turned to one of those gods that had previously enslaved them. They had been freed from it, but here they are again turning back to it. Turning back to an idol. Turning, really, to a new deliverer. Perhaps this golden cow, perhaps this god that they knew in Egypt, could bring them into the Promised Land. Perhaps he could deliver the meat and the vegetables and the delicacies that they so desired.

Well, you kind of know what happens in the rest of the story, but this gives us a little window into idolatry. This is something that the children of Israel would do forever. They would trust other empires; they would trust their political treaties; they would trust Chemosh and Molech and Baal for fertility and for rains and for harvest. They would have a history of turning to idols to save them when God was the one who would save them.

So we have a story here, we have a window into idolatry and the idol in the story is – I'm going to give you a simple definition – throughout the summer I'm going to be showing you different angles on idolatry, but an idol is – I want to bring some New Testament into

it – an idol is a counterfeit Christ. An idol is a counterfeit Christ. It's a substitute God; a substitute deliverer; an alternate deliverer. But let me put New Testament wording on it: it is an antichrist; it is a counterfeit Christ. You see, Christ is our refuge. Amen? Christ is our hiding place. Christ is our shelter in a time of storm and when we walk to the valley of the shadow of death, he is our shepherd. Yet, we often turn to other hiding places, do we not? We often turn to other refuges; we often turn to other shelters in a time of storm. He is our Prince of Peace and we turn to other things. We turn, in fact, to the creation. We exchanged the truth for a lie and worship the creation rather than the Creator thinking that it can save us rather than the God who promises to save us. Do you understand that? An idol is a counterfeit Christ.

Now, if an idol is a counterfeit Christ, idolatry is using that counterfeit Christ to bring about heaven, really, a Christ-less heaven. You see, it's the Promised Land without Moses and without God. It's heaven without the true Christ and sometimes we turn to our counterfeit christs in this world to bring us the heaven that we desire. There is a very religious element to it. You say, "But Pastor, I thought that idolatry was bowing down to metal images, to metal idols." Yes, of course it is. If anyone here is bowing to a metal idol, that is idolatry, no doubt. But, really, even in the Old Testament, the metal idol was a means to an end. Do you understand that the Israelites didn't love cows; they didn't have some affinity with cattle. They were looking to the golden cow to bring about the heaven, the Promised Land, that they so desired. They were looking to the idol for something that it promised to deliver. The counterfeit Christ promises a counterfeit heaven and we look to that. It's not that they have an affinity with cattle, it's that the cattle makes promises that it doesn't deliver.

The same thing happens in the New Testament. We often exchange the truth for a lie and worship the creation rather than the Creator which is idolatry. And we look to the creation to save us rather than the Creator. Think of Adam and Eve: what was it that Eve and Adam wanted? What was it that they desired? Did they need more vitamin C in their diet, is that it? Did they not have enough fruit to pick from? Did they just love apples and need more fiber, perhaps? Weight Watcher's, you get more points with more fiber. What is it that Adam and Eve wanted? Well, Adam and Eve wanted, say it, to be like God. It's not that they wanted the apple, though the apple looked shiny. I know it wasn't an apple, necessarily, I'm just going to say apple. Though the apple was shiny and the apple looked as though it was good for food and good to make one wise, it's not that they wanted it, it was a means to an end. Do you understand that? It made promises, of course, through the whisperings of Satan, it made promises, "I can save you. I can deliver you. I can bring you the heaven that you so desire." And yet it was lying. And as all idols do, they lie and they actually deliver us into death and Eve in that moment, Eve worshipped the creation rather than the Creator and sacrificed her own life on the altar to her god. It was a worship act, the first sin of all mankind. In fact, all sins are that of idolatry. You see, the apple was the counterfeit Christ and the godhood was the counterfeit heaven. You see that.

When Moses comes down off the mountain, you remember the story, he is filled with rage and anger, righteous indignation, and he shatters the Ten Commandments and then

he does something spectacular: he melts down the golden cow. They had already sacrificed all of their wealth for this idol. He melts it down and then he grinds the stone part, I guess, into a powder and he puts the powder into their water and makes them all drink it. We will not be doing that this summer, but what we will be doing is looking at it. It might be that what we drink is an idol and what we eat and many other elements in the creation. We may be looking at that. So, I want to spend a summer of smashing idols, grounding them into a fine powder and letting us have dominion over the creation rather than the creation having dominion over us. Amen? That's what we're hoping to do.

Let's get a question to get started and it's going to be a touchy morning, just so you know. Let's have a question to get started. The question I'd like to ask is this: in trial, in tribulation, when you're in the wilderness, what is it that you turn to? Martin Luther says that in adversity what you run to is your idol and I completely agree. That when you are down and out, in the doldrums, when you are in a time of despair and darkness, what is it that you turn to? Do you turn to comfort food or to the Comforter? See, I told you it was going to hurt. Do you drink away your sorrows? Drown your sorrows in alcohol or do you turn to the one who can wipe away all tears? Amen? What is it that you turn to. Do you turn to tranquilizers, antidepressants, pain medicine? I told you it's going to hurt.

Listen, the image of the lonely drunk sitting in the corner bar, drinking his sorrows away, sacrificing his family and his wealth on the altar of his god, those days, they're still here sort of but that's really an old stereotype. Today's drunks are stay-at-home Moms. Today's drunks are politicians and police officers and pastors and normal everyday people because we have better things than alcohol to drown away our sorrows these days. We have to examine this very carefully as a church. We have to examine it.

What is it that we run to in times of trial? Do we run to the couch? When I feel despair or when you feel despair, do you think, "I need to sleep away my problems. Maybe a day or two of sleeping with deal with it." Do you turn to the couch into sloth, into laziness? Do you turn to music? Do you turn to people? You know, people can be idols, as well, I'm sure you're aware of that. Do you turn to work? Do you turn to exercise? What is it that you turn to in times of despair? What is it for you that is acting as a functional savior? I'm not saying that you don't have a Savior, I'm saying that if you are born-again, that Jesus Christ is your Savior and though we walk in the wilderness, we still are attracted to the gods of Egypt. In other words, we still have the flesh, do we not? And the flesh still desires the works of the flesh.

So, though we have a Savior, sometimes we have functional saviors and we commit idolatry every day. Martin Luther, the first of his 95 Theses, I'm sure you remember that word-for-word, right? The first one taught, basically, that we are to be repenting every day. Repentance is not just something you do at the beginning of the Christian life, repentance is something that you do every day. Every day you are turning from those counterfeit christs and running into the arms of the real Christ, worshipping the Creator rather than the creation. So, what acts for you as a functional savior? Those are all very important questions.

Today's example, and we're going to have many examples throughout the summer and we're going to be looking to Solomon, he was very wise. We're going to be looking to Solomon for some help throughout this but today's example is alcohol and drugs. Alcohol and drugs. And you say, "Well, Pastor, you know I don't drink and I don't take drugs. I don't even take any prescription drugs." Well then, if that's the case, I don't want you to fall asleep, I want you to just apply everything that I say to food and I'm pretty sure you'll have something to think about. That's just a hunch I have, but just apply everything I say to food and you'll be okay.

This is a difficult topic, though, it's very delicate. Statistics say that 43% of Americans deal in their families with some form of alcoholism, they have felt the effects of it, 43%. Fifteen million people, they say, are alcoholics in the United States and in Louisiana we have just about 300,000. That's a significant number in Louisiana. In the year 2002, so we have some old statistics here, 40%, almost half of incoming freshman, were on some form of psychotropic drug. Some form of mood altering drug. That was in 2002, almost half. What do you imagine the statistics are today? I guarantee you they're much, much higher.

From 1985 to 1999, some of you don't remember those years but from 1985 to 1999, prescriptions handed out to children increased by, guess what percentage? Not 100. Not 200. But 327% increase from 1985 to 1999 and we are in 2011. We live in a brave new world. A brave new world that disciplines children with drugs. A brave new world that deals with the problems of life with chemicals. Alcohol, prescription medications, street drugs. Maybe you don't think the church should be even talking about these things but I think the church should be talking about these things. I believe the Bible has much to say about these things and I believe this issue is a destroyer of families and a destroyer of even Christian families and so we must talk about it.

It's also difficult because the church has totally botched this. You know, the typical church shtick is, "Don't drink or you'll become a homeless person. Don't drink if you want to be successful in life. You want to be a contender. You want to be somebody. You want to go far in life. Well, then, don't do drugs and don't drink alcohol." That's the typical church moralistic spiel. But in that spiel you have to understand that what they are propping up is a different idol. It's the idol of not drinking and not smoking and not doing drugs as though that's going to bring about your salvation and as though that is going to be your functional savior. But I am not dealing specifically, necessarily, with alcohol and drugs, I'm dealing with idolatry. And so, let me tell you that doing drugs is not the answer and it is not your savior and not doing them is not your savior and not the answer either. Christ is the Savior. So, that's the difference between moralism and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, because the church has botched that so much in their legalistic, moralistic, therapeutic preaching, because of that it makes it touchy. In fact, when I said the word "alcohol and drugs" some of you probably thought that's where I was headed, right there, it's just like a trigger in your mind. "He's going to say, Don't do it if you want to be successful." No, not going to happen. Plenty of sober people are unsuccessful in this world. Amen?

Here's another difficulty: it's also difficult because it is very confusing. You say, "Pastor, what are you saying? Alcohol and prescription drugs are bad? You know, burn victims use pain medicine and that's a good thing." I totally agree. Alcohol and drugs are not bad things, I have nothing against them. I have nothing against street drugs in and of themselves. What I have a problem with is with people turning the creation rather than the Creator for salvation. Do you understand? The problem does not lie in the creation, the problem lies in the people turning to the creation for their salvation. That's what I am speaking on today.

I'm not saying that those things are bad. Apples aren't bad. Whatever Adam and Eve ate, it wasn't bad in and of itself. Cows aren't even bad and golden cows aren't even bad, they might make good lawn ornaments. The problem is when you look to that as a functional savior. That's where the idolatry comes in and that's where the preacher of God's Word comes in. Do you understand? Does everybody understand that? I want to clear up all the confusion because that makes things difficult and I don't want you to hear me saying something that I do not say.

It makes it even more difficult because we live in a world that has a pagan and a materialistic worldview. Let me explain that to you, it's very important: when I say materialistic I don't mean that they go shopping at the mall. What I mean when I say the world has a materialistic worldview is that they see man as purely physical. Purely physical. So, when a child has a rebellious issue, they call it oppositional defiant disorder. When a person has an issue with anxiety or they have an issue with depression or an issue with discouragement or anger, the world thinks of that as a purely physical problem. Does it have physical side-effects? Absolutely. Is there a physical part involved? Absolutely. But the world, especially those in the medical field, see it as a purely physical problem, like you have your wires crossed, a rope that just needs a little bit of extra tuning, a little fine-tuning. Or maybe you just have a little chemical imbalance and a pill, here you go, puts you right back in order. But we know by experience that that typically never works.

Now, we're not saying that there's not a connection. The Bible says there is two sides to man, both the material and immaterial, and that they affect one another. Turn to Psalms, if you would, and I want to go Psalm 32. You say, "But Pastor, look, my doctor is not an atheist. He doesn't believe that I'm just a robot, he believes that people have a soul." Probably so, but you have to understand your doctor probably studied at a university and read textbooks written by those who were materialists. A materialistic worldview dominates academia in our culture. And I'm not making a sweeping general statement, of course not, but you have to be careful. If your doctor thinks that you are just a slightly evolved ape or a robot of some sort, you have to be careful when you go to him about anxiety and sins of the heart. Amen?

I'll give you another example: the world calls drunkenness and addiction a disease. The Bible says that drunkards will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Could you imagine the Bible saying people with cancer will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven? Could you

imagine that? No, because drunkenness and cancer are not the same thing. Drunkenness is not a disease, it's a sin. It's a sin of idolatry. Now, it's like a disease in that you lose control in a sense but it's like a disease in that way, it's not a disease. It's also like idolatry in that way because idols become dominant in our lives as well.

Let's look at Psalm 32:1 and I want to show you that there is a connection in the Bible between the spiritual and the physical. Psalm 32:1, "Blessed," or happy, "is the one whose transgression is forgiven." Who can say Amen to that? Amen! When you know that your sins are forgiven, there is a happiness there, there is a joy there. There is something to shout about and to dance about and to praise God over. There is something that affects our emotions when we know that we will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and that our sins are washed as white as snow.

"Happy is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy, or blessed, is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit." Notice this, "For when I kept silent." David is saying and this is just after his fornication, his adultery with Bathsheba, he says, "Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven." Happy is that man, but he says, "But when I kept silent." Kept silent over what? Kept silent over Bathsheba and murdering her husband and stealing his wife. When he kept silent over that, "my bones wasted away. Through my groaning all day long." What wasted away? His spirit, only his spirit because there's no connection between the spirit and the body? No, no, no, his bones wasted away and he groaned all the day long.

"For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me." Picture the hand of God pressing him down, waiting on top of him, him groaning all day long, his bones aching. "My strength was dried up as in the heat of the summer." What does that sound like to you? Does that not sound like depression? Does that not sound like a man on his couch in agony and self-pity and weight and guilt and depression?

But then look at verse 32:5, "I acknowledged my sin to You." Here we come with confession, a spiritual endeavor. He confesses his sins and "I did not cover my iniquity, I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord; and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Therefore, let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found: surely in the rush of great waters they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me. You preserve me from trouble. Blessed is the man, happy is the man whose sins are forgiven." Do you see the connection there between his body and his soul? The material and the immaterial? The Bible teaches that they are connected and I bet you know that from personal experience as well. I bet you do.

Let me move on. I get some help here from Dr. Laura Hendrikson and we have a new book in the bookstore called "Will Medicine Stop the Pain?" It's written by Elyse Fitzpatrick, an excellent author and Laura Hendrickson, who was a former psychiatrist who is now a biblical counselor and I get much help from her in how this affects people. Listen, she says, and I'm paraphrasing: drugs will improve feelings without changing the way the person responds to their environment. You hear that? It will change feelings but

it won't change your behavior. So they produce a mood that is contrary to reality. When a husband loses his job, when a son dies in war, when a best friend betrays, we will feel pain and we should feel emotional pain. Amen? We are not in the Promised Land yet. We still walk in the wilderness.

The problem is that pain is meant to drive us to Christ. Pain is meant to drive us to repentance. Pain is meant to drive us to confession. Pain is meant to drive us to proper Christian mourning. Pain is meant to drive us to our real Savior. When we immediately turn to the creation, we deal only with the symptoms and not the cause. Then when the individual quits taking the drugs or drinking the alcohol, the bad feelings return predictably because the cause was never dealt with, only the symptoms. You see, that is the danger for the Christian. I speak to you as Christians this morning and here is the danger: that when we have a problem that is at root spiritual, we must turn to Jesus Christ to answer and drugs have a way of masking the symptoms and the pain and causes us to delay in running to Christ. What would happen if David's counselor told him, "David, there's no such thing as sin and there's no such thing as God and judgment and guilt. David, what you're having here is a chemical imbalance." What would have happened with his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah? There would have been a delay.

Let's get some wisdom from Solomon. Let's go to Proverbs 23. Solomon, if you don't know Solomon, was the wisest man to ever walk the earth other than Jesus Christ. God said, "Solomon, what would you like me to give you?" And Solomon didn't say power, he didn't say wealth, he didn't say a kingdom greater than any other kingdom, what he said was, "I want wisdom," and God gave him much wisdom. So, Solomon deals with the practical things in life in a very wise and spiritual way and he shows us the way of the fool which is another way of saying the way of idolatry. And he shows us the way of the wise, which is another way of saying walking in the fear of the Lord or walking within daily repentance.

Solomon is very wise and let's look at Proverbs 23:31. He says, "Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly." He says in Proverbs 20:1, "Whoever is led astray by it is not wise," but a fool. Now, you have to understand, Solomon is not saying that alcohol is evil. He's not saying that. He's not saying that alcohol and I would lump into this particular scenario many prescription drugs as well. They work on the same receptors in the brain, not all of them but some of them. I would apply this to all of these things. I'd apply it to food as well, to be honest with you. I'd apply it to many different things that we put in. But, he's not saying that alcohol is evil. No, no. He says in the other verse to give wine, to give strong drink to those who are in bitter pain and to those who are in bitter distress. He's not saying it's evil. There is a place and a time for all of these things. It is a creation that God made, but what he is saying is though it is not evil, it is enticing.

What wine does is it makes promises. It's writing checks that it can't cash. Do you understand? It's talking big. It's saying, "Do you need a shelter in a time of storm? I could be that for you. Do you need a refuge? I can be that for you. Are you walking through the valley of the shadow of death? I can be that for you." And that's what he

means when he says, “Do not look upon when it is red, when the sun reflects off of it and it is sparkling and goes down smoothly,” because it’s making promises that it cannot keep. It is promising to be a counterfeit Christ and it cannot save. And so, though it is not evil, it is enticing so we must be cautious. Are there not people, even Christians, who turn to it in times of trial? Many. Many.

Let’s look at verse 29, if you would. This brings to mind Thomas Brooks, an old Puritan. He said that Satan was like a fisherman and Satan would take the things that you desire and he would place them on a hook and he would dangle them in front of you. Entice you, so to speak, make promises. Remember him beside the apple with Eve? “It can make one wise. It can make you like God.” He dangles the hook in front of us and then when we bite, we are enslaved to the idol but really the Satan. He does the same thing with wine. “It sparkles. It can solve your problems.”

Go to verse 29, if you would. Proverbs 23:29 he says, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?” Do you know this guy? Have you met him before? Or do you know this gal? You know, alcohol is not the only thing that does this, by the way. “Those who tarry long over wine,” he says. He says, “Who has strife?” And is it not true that those who tarry long over wine, those who are drunkards, those who turn to alcohol for their salvation, strife enters into their families. Strife enters into their life and they sacrifice their family on the altar to their god.

He says, “Who has sorrow?” It’s interesting that we turn to it when we have sorrow, yet what does it deliver but more sorrow because it makes promises it cannot keep. It is not Christ. It is not a Savior. “Who has sorrow? Who has strife?” He says, “Who has redness of eyes and wounds without cause?” You see, here we have the drunk offering up his body as a living sacrifice to his god.

Verse 20, if you would. Proverbs 23:20, “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat.” You see, there’s a connection between drinking and food. I told you that. “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty.” You see, here we have the man who turned to this in his time of despair and he is now sacrificing his wealth on the altar of his god. Proverbs says that a wise man, listen carefully to this, a wise man saves an inheritance not just for his children but for his grandchildren. We want to bear fruit for God; we want our children to bear fruit as well and it helps if they have a little head start. That’s wisdom from Solomon. And it helps if your grandchildren have a little head start as well. A wise man saves an inheritance for his grandchildren, but a fool listens to the promises of alcohol and sacrifices his wealth on the altar to his god. Is it not true.

He says, “who is it that has poverty. Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,” and notice what else they’ll come do, joblessness, “and slumber will clothe them with rags,” because they will sleep away their days and they will be fired and they will lose all. Sacrificing his job, sacrificing his wealth, sacrificing his family, all on the altar to his god. It’s a worship act.

Proverbs 23:35. He says, "They struck me, you will say, but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it." You see, here we have the altered reality, the altered reality. He is being hurt and yet he does not feel. The symptoms are being covered and he does not feel. Now, don't get me wrong: there are some times it is good to not feel pain. If you've had a surgery, it's good to not feel pain. And blessed be to God that in providence he has caused doctors to invent pain medicine for those times. Amen! Hallelujah! My wife would agree, pain medicine is a good thing. Creation is good inherently. It's when people turn to that which has been created to save them.

Some pain is good not to feel. Lepers, for example. The reason why leprosy would kill people is not the disease necessarily, but the fact that it made the skin lose its sense of touch and so a leper could be sweeping a floor not knowing that a nail was sticking out of the broom handle and rip his hand up so much that it has to be amputated. Or a leper could sleep at night while a rat gnaws off the side of his foot and then he has to have his foot amputated. You see, there are some times it's good to feel pain. Amen?

Sometimes it's good to not feel pain and sometimes it's good to feel pain. When you put your hand over the fire, it's good to feel pain because if you don't, you'll lose a hand. And it motivates us to move. Now, I will tell you that I believe the same thing is true for emotional pain. Anxiety can be a good thing. Anxiety motivates us to action. Anxiety motivates us to pull our hand away before we get burned. Depression, it can motivate us into action but before it motivates us into action, if we turn to the creation rather than the Creator and we eliminate the symptoms our hand will remain over the stove and we will lose it. So, sometimes it's good to not feel pain but sometimes it's good to feel pain and to act on account of it.

God has given us these emotional pains to lead us to Christ and lead us to repentance. I tell you, I didn't plan on saying this so I'm not sure how it's going to come out, but I've experience this recently in my own life. As you know, pastors get a lot of phone calls and a lot of texts. The thing about the phone is that it demands immediate attention. You know, even a text. You would think texts do not demand immediate attention but when you text someone, you're kind of sitting there waiting for them to text you right back. It's not like an email that you can wait a day or two and that's normal, normal protocol.

With a phone, it demands immediate response and in my job I have to usually sit every day for about 3-4 hours in solitude and in concentration. And when that phone comes and demands immediate response, it triggers in me anxiety. Okay, real anxiety. Now, there was a season there where a few of those phone calls were kind of negative, kind of grumpy and I was filled with a whole lot of anxiety. And so, eventually, it got to the point where when the phone would ring, I would immediately feel anxiety. It could be my best friend on the phone. It could be, "Happy Birthday! You've won a million dollars."

But when the phone rang, I immediately felt anxiety. Real anxiety. I felt it down into my legs and you could ask my close friends, it was something I was wrestling with for about three months. But that anxiety, I believe God sent to drive me to examine my heart and I

think I found what the sin was. I think I found what the idol was. The idol was people pleasing. That's what it was, it was people pleasing because when those persons called and they weren't happy with me, that's what triggered it right there and I repented of that people pleasing and the anxiety went away and I said, "You know, I'm gonna stand on biblical principle. I'm gonna do what is right. I'm never gonna be able to please everyone but if I stand on biblical principle I can know that I am doing what God desires." And the anxiety went away.

Now, I realize my anxieties are nothing compared to the anxieties of someone who has been brutally injured. I understand that. I understand my anxieties are nothing compared to someone whose spouse has cheated on them or someone whose father is a drug addict. I know that and so I don't want to diminish those trials. The point of the story is this: that sometimes pain is meant to motivate us to search our heart for sin, to search our heart for the idols and to repent of it. Repent of it. I hope that helps.

Proverbs 23:35, he says, "I was hurt but I did not feel it." That's dangerous. Proverbs 23:35b, read the rest of it, "When shall I awake? I must have another drink." You see, he's hit rock bottom and it has done nothing for him. We say often that once they hit rock bottom, then they will have freedom from their idol, then they will have freedom from the slavery but it's simply not true. Here we have a man hitting rock bottom and the alcohol is now promising something else. The alcohol is promising to deliver him from the problems that it created. And a vicious cycle that we call enslavement, slavery, he is now not using it to handle his anxieties and his depression, it is now using him. It is now controlling him.

It's idolatry but it's also enslavement and there's only one way to be free from slavery. There is only one way to be free from enslavement and that is if God would send a deliverer. Amen? And God has sent a Deliverer. Amen? Listen to Titus 3:3, "We also once were foolish," following the way of the fool. "We also once were foolish ourselves, we were disobedient, we were deceived, we believed the lie and we also were once enslaved," Paul writes in Titus 3:3, "to various lusts and pleasures." If I put Old Testament words on it, "to various idols." Enslaved to them, they've got us by a ring in our nose, pulled away by the lusts of our own flesh. We once were like that but when the kindness of God our Savior, in his love for mankind appeared, he saved us.

Which means he freed us. Sin should no longer have dominion to reign over our mortal bodies. Amen, church? So, what you need to be free is you need a deliverer and God has already sent him. His name is, not Moses, but it's Jesus Christ. It's Jesus Christ. But we are not yet in the Promised Land. I know that for sure. We are not yet in heaven. We still are in the wilderness and we still must walk each day by faith looking to our Deliverer and when he doesn't deliver on time, we don't turn to another one. Amen? We wait for him to come back down off the mountain and lead us onward into the Promised Land.

So, daily we must be looking to Jesus Christ and turning away from the idols of Egypt and turning and looking towards Jesus Christ every single day. I want to help you with this, though. I'm usually guilty of being very specific about the sin and not very specific

about the repentance part, but I want to help you with this, this morning. We all need some help here. Let me just say this: if this morning you see the problem. This week I saw one big problem. It was a glaring idol in my life, but definitely one that involved things that go in my mouth and they usually come in aluminum cans but we'll talk about that later. If you have noticed the idol, let me tell you this: you're no longer dominated by it. You need to understand that. You are no longer dominated if you feel the fight. As they say, knowing is half the battle and it's very true. If you have spotted it. If God, the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Word has unmasked the idol and you now see where he is, you can deliver some sound blows. Amen?

You know, in the first Persian Gulf War when the United States military went in there, the real problem with the Iraqi Royal Troops was that they could never see us because we had night vision and we would attack by night and they didn't even know which direction to shoot in. But as a Christian, when you know what the enemy is, if he's been unmasked by the Holy Spirit, listen, don't wallow in self-pity, you're no longer dominated. He has been identified to you and now you can deliver the blows necessary. Amen?

Deliverance doesn't necessarily come immediately but if you feel the fight, let me tell you, you're not a slave to it. If you don't know about it, if no one has ever told you or pointed it out or if the Bible hasn't convicted you of it, if you don't know about it, then you are enslaved to it. If you know about it, you are no longer dominated. If you feel the struggle, then you're alive. You're on the road to wisdom.

Let me say what else: as you identify it, once it is identified, don't call it a nice name. Give it something nasty. You know, don't say, "My feelings get hurt a lot." Say, "I'm a bitter person." That's how you need to speak when you're talking about your own sin. Don't give it a nice, pretty name. Name it for the ugly beast that it is. Don't say, "You know, my feelings just get hurt a little bit. I'm always just concerned," when really you are plagued by anxiety which Jesus calls a lack of faith. Amen? Give it the real name. Don't say it's a disease, say it's idolatry. It is the way of a fool. I have fallen for a trick. I have been deceived and hoodwinked. I have been tripped but now I must fight back. Give it a real name and smash that thing.