

Flee From Idolatry

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1 Corinthians 10:14

INTRODUCTION

1. Some years ago when I first ventured into a study on the subject of worship and I came across an example of what worship is not that I would like to share with you.
2. In his book, *Ultimate Worship*, John MacArthur shares the following story: “A few years ago the Chicago Tribune reported the story of a New Mexico woman who was frying tortillas when she noticed that the skillet burns on one of her tortillas resembled the face of Jesus. Excited, she showed it to her husband and neighbors, and they all agreed that there was a face etched on the tortilla and that it truly bore a resemblance to Jesus.
3. So the woman went to her priest to have the tortilla blessed. She testified that the tortilla had changed her life, and her

husband agreed that she had been a more peaceful, happy, submissive wife since the tortilla had arrived. The priest, not accustomed to blessing tortillas, was somewhat reluctant but agreed to do it.

4. The woman took the tortilla home, put it in a glass case with piles of cotton to make it look like it was floating on clouds, built a special altar for it, and opened the little shrine to visitors. Within a few months, more than eight thousand people came to the shrine of the Jesus of the Tortilla, and all of them agreed that the face in the burn marks on the tortilla was the face of Jesus (except for one reporter who said he thought it looked like former heavy-weight boxing champion Leon Spinks)” (John MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority* , p.1).
5. That is idolatry and that is our subject this morning.
6. Please take your Bibles this morning and turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 10
7. We are continue Paul's treatment of Christian liberty as we continue our study of chapter 10.
8. This morning we are considering verse 14 as Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "flee from idolatry."

9. That's essentially what he says with the addition of two other words.
10. "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."
11. "Therefore" refers us back to what he has already said.
12. He had just given the Corinthians examples of)6 abusing their liberty by listing the sins Israel committed and were disciplined severely by the Lord.
13. Shortly after they came out of Egypt, they worshipped a golden calf (v.7).
14. Then they committed sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab (v.8).
15. And then tried the Lord (v.9) by speaking against Him and Moses and loathed the manna and water God provided.
16. God sent "fiery serpents" that "bit the people, so that many people of Israel died" (Num.21:6).
17. Then Israel grumbled "and were destroyed by the destroyer" (v.10).

18. All these things "happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (v.11).
19. Because of these examples, the Corinthians are to "flee from idolatry" (v.14).
20. The word "flee" (pheugo) is used in the LXX to speak of fleeing "from or away, to take flight" (Abbott-Smith, A Manuel Greek Lexicon of the NT)
21. The word is translated "ran away" in Matthew 8:33 to describe the herdsmen who ran away after seeing Jesus cast demons out of pigs and the pigs running and drowning in the lake.
22. It's translated "escape" in Matthew 23:33 by Jesus when He was rebuking the Pharisees and asking "how will you escape the sentence of hell?"
23. It's also translated "fled" in Matthew 26:56 to describe the disciples reaction after Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane.
24. The Corinthians must run fast from idols.

25. The same is true for all believers today.

26. The Apostle John said in 1 John 5:21 (NASB) Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

27. Why is this so important?

28. Because...

1

God Forbids Idolatry

BIBLE VERSE

Exodus 20:2-3 (NASB) “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 **“You shall have no other gods before Me.**

BIBLE VERSE

Deuteronomy 5:7 (NASB) **You shall have no other gods before Me.**

A. IDOLATRY IS AN ABOMINATION TO GOD

1. As Paul has made clear in 10:1–13, idolatry, immorality, and complaining against God are not questionable things; they are outright sins.

2. Christians have no liberty in regard to such things.
3. In the next nine verses (14–22) the apostle explains why the sin of idolatry is especially abominable to God.
4. It is not a moral issue to eat something offered to an idol, but it is a serious sin to engage in any form of idol worship.
(MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

B. IDOLATRY IS REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (NASB) 1 “ If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled **rebellion against the LORD your God** who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

C. IDOLATRY BRINGS GOD'S WRATH

Colossians 3:5-7 (NASB) Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 **For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,** 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

D. IDOLATRY IS A WORK OF THE FLESH

Galatians 5:19-20 (NASB) "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry..."

QUOTE

A god begotten in the shadows of a fallen heart will, quite naturally, be no true likeness of the true God.

A.W. Tozer,

QUESTION

Since God forbids idolatry, what exactly is it?

2

What is Idolatry?

QUOTE

Idolatry includes much more than bowing down or burning incense to a physical image. Idolatry is having any false god—any object, idea, philosophy, habit, occupation, sport, or whatever that has one’s primary concern and loyalty or that to any degree decreases one’s trust in and loyalty to the Lord.

There is no other God but the God of the Bible, and He is a jealous God who will not tolerate the worship of another. In Isaiah 48:11, God says: “My glory will I not give to another.” Exodus 34:14 says, “You shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

John MacArthur, 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

3

What Does Idolatry Include?

A. BOWING DOWN TO IMAGES

1. Exodus 20:1-6 (NASB) 1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,
2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 “You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 “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. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.
2. It's repeated to the second generation in Deuteronomy 5:7

B. WORSHIPING IMAGES

Isaiah 44:9-17 (NASB) 9 Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame. 10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit? 11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them

all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame. 12 The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary. 13 Another shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house. 14 Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow. 15 Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it. 16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire." 17 But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god."

C. SACRIFICING TO IMAGES

Acts 7:39-43 (NASB) 39 Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him (Moses), but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, 40 SAYING TO AARON, 'MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO

LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT—WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.’ 41 At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. 42 But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, ‘IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? 43 YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.’

D. WORSHIPING OTHER GODS

1. Exodus 22:20 (NASB) “He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the LORD alone, shall be utterly destroyed.
2. Deuteronomy 8:19-20 (NASB) It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. 20 Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.
3. Deuteronomy 30:15-18 (NASB) 15 “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; 16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to

walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. 17 But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.

4. Psalms 81:9-10 (NASB) 9 “Let there be no strange god among you; nor shall you worship any foreign god. 10 “I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

E. SWEARING BY OTHER GODS

Joshua 23:6-8 (NASB) Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, 7 so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them. 8 But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

F. SPEAKING IN THE NAME OF OTHER GODS

Deuteronomy 18:18-20 (NASB) 18 I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. 20 But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

G. WORSHIPING THE TRUE GOD BY AN IMAGE

1. Exodus 32:4-6 (NASB) He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." 5 Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." 6 So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.
2. Psalms 106:19-20 (NASB) They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a molten image. 20 Thus they exchanged their glory for the image of an ox that eats grass.

H. WORSHIPING ANGELS

1. Colossians 2:18 (NASB) Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and **the worship of the angels**, taking his stand on visions he has seen.
2. Revelation 19:7-10 (NASB) 7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” 10 **Then I fell at his feet to worship him.** But he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”
3. Revelation 22:8-9 (NASB) I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, **I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.** 9 But he *said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”

I. WORSHIPING CELESTIAL OBJECTS

Deuteronomy 4:15-19 (NASB) 15 “So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, 16 so that you

do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth. 19 And beware not to lift up your eyes to **heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven**, and be drawn away and **worship them and serve them**, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

J. WORSHIPING DEMONS

1. Matthew 4:9-10 (NASB) and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus *said to him, “Go, **Satan!** For it is written, ‘**YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.**’”
2. Revelation 9:20 (NASB) The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to **worship demons**, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

K. WORSHIPING DEAD MEN

Psalms 106:28 (NASB) They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead.

L. COVETOUSNESS

1. Ephesians 5:5 (NASB) For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or **covetous man, who is an idolater**, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.
2. Colossians 3:5 (NASB) Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and **greed, which amounts to idolatry**.

M. SENSUALITY

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

APPLICATION

1. For believers, idolatry is from our past not the present

1 Peter 4:3 (NASB) **For the time already past** is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing,

drinking parties and abominable **idolatrics**.

2. We must understand the dangers associated with idolatry

1. It causes you to forget God

Jeremiah 18:15 (NASB) For My people have forgotten Me, they burn incense to worthless gods and they have stumbled from their ways, from the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, not on a highway.

2. It causes you to profane God's name

Ezekiel 5:11 (NASB) So as I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare.

3. It causes you to forsake God

Ezekiel 14:4-5 (NASB) Therefore speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Any man of the house of Israel 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, 5

in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are **estranged** from Me through all their idols.””

4. It causes you to provoke God to anger

Deuteronomy 31:16-18 (NASB) The LORD said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, ‘Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?’ 18 But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods.

3. We must guard our hearts against idolatry

4. Remove from your life anything that has your heart over Christ

5. Make sure you love Him first and foremost (see Rev.2, church at Ephesus)

6. If you're guilty of idolatry, I call you to repent.'

7. If you're guilty of not knowing Christ, come to Him now and be cleansed and forgiven of all your sin.

8. Let's pray.