

**Idolatry Today**  
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Good morning and welcome to Lighthouse Baptist Church!

Are you ready for the Word of God?

If you have read your Bible, you will have noticed that idolatry is a sin that is particularly hated and commanded against by the Lord.

I personally believe that the primary reason that God hates sin so much is because of the damage it does to us, whom He loves.

There are, no doubt, other reasons as well.

Idolatry is damaging and dangerous on many levels.

The extremes of it can be seen in displays of open demonic worship like the Astroworld concert earlier this month right here in Houston where nine young people were crushed to death and dozens of others were seriously injured while demon possessed entertainers looked on and laughed.

How serious is the sin of idolatry? It is far more serious than you probably realize.

**1 Samuel 15:23** For rebellion *is* as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is* as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD...

**Galatians 5:19-21**

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 **Idolatry**, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

People today, even ignorant Christians, dabble in witchcraft and its companion sin of idolatry like it is something cute and harmless; let me assure you that neither is harmless!

Listen to God's Word on this; relatively certain that many of you do not realize what you are messin' with; we'll start with the basic commandments themselves:

**Exodus 20:3-6**

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou **shalt not make** unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that is in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

5 Thou **shalt not bow down** thyself to them, **nor serve** them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Three commands: Don't make (or procure for yourself), don't bow (or worship) don't serve (care for) it.

**Leviticus 26:1** Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up *any* image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I *am* the LORD your God.

**Deuteronomy 27:15** Cursed *be* the man that maketh **any graven or molten image**, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth *it* in a secret *place*. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

### **Psalm 135:15-18**

15 The **idols of the heathen** *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

16 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;

17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there *any* breath in their mouths.

18 They that **make them** [bring forth or procure] are like unto them: *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

### **Jeremiah 10:2-6**

2 Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

3 For the customs of the people *are* vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

5 They *are* upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also *is it* in them to do good.

6 Forasmuch as *there is* none like unto thee, O LORD; thou *art* great, and thy name *is* great in might.

We see idolatry all over the place. We've got Buddhist and Hindu temples all over town; statues everywhere, even native American totem poles and supposed Churches filled with statues and pictures....we've got idols standing everywhere.

But we know better than to participate in idolatry, right? Or do we?

Some of you need to do some house cleaning (I suppose some do, but I'm not talking about dirt and clutter).

I'm talking about your cute little Buddhas and your totem poles and your astrological charts and your dream catchers and your crucifixes and your angels and your pictures of Jesus (*any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above*), remember?

All that kind of stuff needs to go in the trash; it is an insult to the God of Heaven who saved you!

'Oh, but Pastor, I need my crucifix to remind me of Jesus'...NO, you don't, God put His Holy Spirit in you to remind you of Jesus when He saved you!

Now that I've upset some of you, I'll tell you what you do. Go ahead and pick out the images and likenesses you want to keep and just ask God if it is OK with Him that you do.

If He tells you it's OK, then we'll just figure I'm understanding this all wrong and you go ahead like you are; fair enough?

Now that we've gotten all that out of the way, and even though I strongly believe that these things are an affront to God, let me point out that none of that is our biggest problem with idolatry today.

It gets worse...a lot worse!

Our main text today is in

**Ezekiel 14:1-11**

1 Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

2 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;

5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself:

8 And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

9 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

10 And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh *unto him*;

11 That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.

These elders in Israel were keeping idols in secret places, even practicing sun worship from back in Egypt, holding on to old ungodly traditions and secretly embracing the gods of the heathen around them.

These men of Israel made some serious mistakes that resulted in serious consequences.

You don't get to claim God as first in your life and just be a pretender in the heart.

### **I. Mistake # 1, they sinned against God.**

*A. It is always a mistake to sin.*

1. Sin has consequences.
2. Even when we confess our sins and God forgives us, the consequences remain.

*B. Sin robs us of our fellowship with God.*

1. Even if you are not wise enough to know it, this is the greatest consequence of all.
2. Thanks to God and His promise to forgive us in [1 John 1:9](#), this mistake is the easiest of all to deal with.
3. Even though we all sin, no Christian has to be out of fellowship with God for even 5 minutes.

### **II. Mistake # 2, they set up idols in their hearts.**

*A. What is an idol of the heart?*

1. An idol of the heart is something that in some way takes that place in your heart that belongs only to God.
2. They didn't merely sin and then deal with it.

3. An idol of the heart is something you are holding on to; something you refuse to forsake that gets in the way of the very reasonable service that God requires of his servants.
4. After what Jesus did for you, placing God first is not too much for Him to ask.

### **Romans 12:1-2**

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

*B. What are we talking about? What are some of these idols of the heart?*

1. **Work** is a very common idol of the heart; your job.

- a. Something that is so important to you that you will miss worship over it.
- b. Something that is so important to you that you would move away from your church for it.

### **c. Hebrews 10:24-25**

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

d. Do you worship God when you don't have something better to do...or because you know there is nothing better you can do.

2. Your **family** can be an idol of the heart.

a. Some believers have family with strong religious ties to false doctrine and Churches and often place their commitment to them above their commitment to the Lord.

### **b. Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-38**

34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

36 And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

3. **Social connections** are common idols of the heart.

a. **1 Corinthians 15:33** Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

b. **2 Corinthians 6:14** Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

c. Scripture after scripture tells us the same things; but some of you are still allowing your lost friends to pull you back into the world.

d. And then you brag about it on Facebook; we'll talk more about that in a bit!

4. **Hobbies and sports** become idols of the heart.

a. Deer season.

b. Softball.

c. Fishing.

d. Little League.

e. T-ball.

f. Soccer.

g. Volleyball.

h. Motocross.

i. Drag racing.

5. All of these things and many more are wonderful and great activities in and of themselves.

6. I have two sons who wanted to race Motocross; and they were good at it. Motocross races are on Sunday morning.

7. I taught two of my sons that having fun and winning rooms full of trophies was more important than worshipping God.

8. I have spent the last 40 years trying to tell them I was wrong but I can never undo the irreparable damage I imprinted on their souls!

9. Some of you are making the same mistake and you are going to regret it for the rest of your life.

***C. Specific sins, partying with the world, drinking, drug use, dishonesty; even retirement dreams... there is no shortage of different idols of the heart that need to be torn down.***

1. Sinning against God is serious business.
2. Holding on to an idol of the heart; those things that get in the way of properly serving and worshipping the Lord, of being a consistent and dedicated servant of God in one of His Churches; these are even more serious.

Yet, these were lightweight compared to their next mistake:

**III. Mistake # 3, they set the idol of their heart out on display to become a stumbling block.** “and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face,”

*A. It is a whole other category of sin when the idol of our heart is set before us on display to become a stumbling block to others.*

1. It is one thing to sin; it is another to hold on to your sin; God forgives you when you confess your sin, even when you are not yet able to forsake it.
2. It is a whole other category to practice your sin openly; to put your heart's idol on display before your sons and daughters and your brothers and sisters in Christ, causing the weak ones to stumble; and it does cause them to stumble!

3. **Luke 17:1-2**

1 Then said he unto the disciples, **It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!**

2 **It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.**

4. I trust that you are wise enough to notice that it is to believers that Jesus issues this warning!

*B. There is always going to be sin in the Church until Jesus comes.*

1. Some seem to think that being open about it is somehow less dishonorable.
2. Not so; sin is something to be ashamed of!
3. In the gentile Church in Corinth, there was a man living in open sin with his stepmom.

**1 Corinthians 5:1-5**

1 It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed.

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
5 To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

4. This man, who was openly displaying an idol of his heart, was dealt a very serious sentence.

*C. Do you think that he was the only one committing this type of sin in this church?*

1. The Corinthian Church was filled with former heathens whose ministers before they got saved were temple prostitutes.

2. No, there were indeed many others:

Read **2 Corinthians 12:21** *And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.*

3. We all, to some degree, come from a background of depravity.

4. After we are saved, the mercy of our loving God gives us time to make progress and tear down our idols; to grow in grace and knowledge and strength.

5. However, **do not** make the mistake of placing that idol of your heart on display.

6. You will be held accountable for the example you set before others.

7. Just like I am being held accountable to tell you the truth about it.

Yet, there was one, even greater mistake:

#### **IV. Mistake #4 was to come inquiring of God in this condition.**

*A. Why are you here today? Have you not come here today to inquire of me, your Pastor, concerning the Lord?*

##### **1. Ezekiel 14:7-8**

7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, **and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me**; I the LORD will answer him by myself:

8 And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.



2. You will sin against God, you are flesh.
3. You may indeed hold on to an idol of your heart; some are right now.
4. You may indeed put your idol on display and even brag about it on Facebook; you, I pray for often.

*B. Do not make that final mistake!*

1. You don't get to show up at Church and join in the worship and listen to the message from God like everything is hunky dory while you are openly displaying the idol of your heart that you have no intention of tearing down...without the promised consequences.
2. You don't get to come to God in that condition and cause the weak ones to think that what you are doing is not so bad.
3. In verse three, God said "should I be inquired of at all by them?"
4. In verse four, God said, "I will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols."
5. Is that what you want?

*C. I know, and God knows, that it is going to take time for you to get your flesh under the control of the Holy Spirit.*

1. It takes time to even figure out that some of these things you are doing is sin.
2. You didn't gather all your sinful habits all at once, and you won't defeat them all at once.
3. But if you think you get to put them on display among God's people, you had better think again.
4. Even some things that are not necessarily sin should be practiced only in private, if at all.

5. **Romans 14:21-23**

21 *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

22 *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

23 *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

## **Conclusion:**

**Everything is not an idol. Yet when we allow a practice, an association, a mind set, a goal or whatever it may be to get in the way of our worship or our fellowship with God; they become idols.**

**Some of these things need to go entirely! I think you probably know which ones those are.**

**Some need to be restricted; cut back on, so that they are no longer hindrances. I think you also know which ones these are.**

**But know this: If you insist on keeping up your party life with the world; until you learn better, you had better do it by yourself in private!**

**If you are going to drink; don't be foolish enough to do it openly among other believers or put it out there on Facebook for all to see.**

**If you want to chase money and skip out on church, you would be better off not to come to church at all if you are not willing to become faithful.**

**I don't want anybody to leave the church. I want everybody here, growing and happy!**

**But facts are facts; God is not going to long put up with our idols being displayed to His dishonor.**

**Yes, when Jesus saved you, He set you free; and free you are.**

**That freedom was designed to enable you to serve the Lord instead of being a slave to sin.**

**Free or not, your choices and your actions WILL bring consequences.**