

Q. What is idolatry?

A. **Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator** for our hope and happiness, significance and security.

Text: **1 John 5:19-21**

- LSB – “Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”
- NLT – “Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God’s place in your hearts.”

Perhaps the clearest understanding of the history and heart of idolatry (pun intended) is found in **Romans 1:18-32**, where the apostle Paul explains why all humans – whether Gentile or Jew<sup>1</sup> – need the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Calvin: “The human heart is a perpetual idol factory.”

Even after conversion, we as Christians must be on the constant lookout for things that seek to steal away our hearts from sole worship, trust, and love of God. The following exhortations given by NT apostles are to Christian churches:

- **Colossians 3:5** (NLT) – “Don’t be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.”
- **Galatians 5:19-21** (LSB) – “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- **1 Corinthians 10:1-14**

---

<sup>1</sup> Most commentators conveniently allocate Romans 1 to the Gentiles and Romans 2 to the Jews. But anyone who has read the OT knows that in Romans 1, Paul is using language attributed to the Jews in the OT, showing that even God’s chosen, covenant people – Israel – must also be supernaturally and graciously redeemed and rescued from the idolatry that is natural to all of Adam’s progeny. This is why the (idolatrous) Jew needs the gospel of Jesus Christ just as much as the (idolatrous) Gentile (see **1:16-18a**).

- **1 Peter 4:1-3**
- **1 John 5:4** – faith is the victory!! Why idolatry is so ‘easy’ (we can ‘see’ it).

What are some Idols we are tempted to trust today?

- Mammon – brings security, prestige, identity
- Work
- Control
- Ease, comfort, leisure, sports,
- Family, friends, food
- Drugs
- Religion, self-righteousness, legalism
- 

**Hosea. 14:8** – “O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you.<sup>1</sup> I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit.”

**Prov. 4:23**

Augustine: sin is really **disordered love** (see especially **Matthew 22:36-40**)

Augustine: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

We are worshippers by nature. We cannot stop or change this ontological truth. We cannot *not* worship. The question is not *if* we will worship – ascribe worth to – but *what* we will worship.

Keller: surface idols vs. root idols (power).

Keller: an idol can be a good thing that becomes a God thing. (e.g. **Jer. 7:4**)

**Isaiah 41:21-24, 29; 44:9-20; 45:16, 20b; 46:1-2, 5-7**

**Jeremiah 2 (esp. v.28)**

Luther: *incurvatus en se*