

“Idol” Worship

In studying 1 John, John has a great deal to say about how we are to live our lives in such a way that is well pleasing to God. His last words of instruction and warning to his readers are simple and direct, and word that we may very well feel are not really directed at us. In 1 John 5:21, John says:

“Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.”

Sure there were problems with idol worship in the first century. In Acts 17, Paul found the city of Athens to be full of idols. In Acts 19, Paul confronted people in Ephesus who worshiped small idols of the goddess Artemis, or Diana. Paul had to deal with idolatry in the letters he wrote to congregations he dealt with. In Romans 1:25, Paul describes many of the Romans as having “Worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.” In 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, Paul addressed the problem of whether or not to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

In 1 Corinthians 10:14, Paul tells the Corinthians to “flee from idolatry” and in 1 Corinthians 12:2, the people of Corinth were characterized as having at one time been “pagans” who were “influenced and led astray to mute idols.” One of the acts of the sinful nature in Galatians 5 is idolatry. And Peter tells his readers that they once spent time living in what he calls “detestable idolatry.”

But surely idolatry is not a problem today. Don't count on it.” The dictionary describes an idol as “an image used as an object of worship” and “something that is adored.” There are a lot of things that we have a great deal of adoration for. We are said to idolize certain people. We dedicate much of our time to our job, our favorite form of recreation, our family. And many people today have replaced God in their lives with something else—some of the things I just mentioned. That makes them idolaters in the truest sense of the word.

God will have first place or He will have no place. That is the message of the first and second commandment. Jesus said, when addressing people who worried about their worldly possessions, said in Matthew 6:33:

“...seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you as well.”

Nothing can take the place of God in our lives. We must choose to put Him far above all that we have or dream to have. We must, as God's dear children, keep ourselves from idols.