

Call to Obedience #317
 PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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Nothing Between My Soul and My Savior

Little Children, Keep Yourselves from Idols.

By Reimar Schultze

This was the parting counsel of John the Beloved. This was the last thought, the last concern of this son of Zebedee as he closed his first epistle. John perceived that he was living in a world full of idolatry and he knew that it would not take much for his 'little children' to transfer their affection from the Lord Jesus to one of those many idols. Let us consider that John's admonition was based on the first of the Ten Commandments, "***Thou shalt have no other gods before me***" (Exodus 20:3). Luther translates this passage like this, "Let there be no other gods by the side of Me." Keil and Delitzsch, renowned Hebrew scholars, put it this way, "Let there not be to thee other gods beyond Me or in addition to Me." They continue "This sentence is quite a general one, and not only prohibits polytheism and idolatry, the worship of idols in thought, word and deed, but also commands the fear, love and worship of God the Lord."

Anything that becomes as important as or more important to us than God Himself is an idol. God wants us not to consider anything as equal or above Him in value because He is a jealous God and has earned the right to be our first love. Hence, the preamble to this first Commandment, and to all the Commandments is, "*I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*" (Exodus 20:2). In other words, I am your God; I have created you and delivered you from darkness and slavery into My abounding salvation to become My espoused Bride. As I have given Myself unreservedly to you, I expect you to give yourself unreservedly to Me. God continues in verse 5 essentially saying: I am a jealous God, and if I don't get your first love, I shall punish you and your descendants down to the fourth generation! This reminds me of the old gospel song:

"Nothing between my soul and the Savior,
 Naught of this world's delusive dreams.
 I have renounced all sinful pleasures
 Jesus is mine, there's nothing between." By C.A. Tindly

Let us have a "nothing between" kind of faith where God's love flows unhindered between Him and us. **This is what the commandments are all about: that there be nothing between us and God.**

We may have our pleasures, but are they sinful pleasures? If so, we are in idolatry even though we may sing in the choir. If we have one or more sinful pleasures, not only we, but also our children will suffer. Indeed, so many churchgoers say, "I don't know why my children and grandchildren have such a terrible time: there is adultery,

drugs, alcohol, yelling, cheating and emptiness.” Friend, if there’s just one sinful pleasure in your life that is what you can expect. You are sowing seeds of trouble into your progeny. Again, God is a jealous God. He wants everyone to be in first love with Jesus and engaged in the evangelization of the whole human race! There must be no idols. God must be our greatest love and pleasure. *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”*

Whether we admit it or not, the dearest thing to our hearts, material things, plans, or even an ideology, can be our idols. It is whatever gives us the most pleasure. Oh, we are all worshippers, all of us. Anthropologists have told us that men are born worshippers. Idol worship leaves its imprint all over our lives, in our thoughts, vocabulary, and financial investments. It is in our use of time and in what we hang on the walls of our homes. It does not take much time to notice a person’s idol once we are with them just a little while.

Let’s get a little deeper into the kinds of idols we have. From antiquity men have made idols, their own gods, out of wood and silver and gold. These are *“the works of men’s hands”*, idols who *“have mouths but they speak not, eyes they have but they see not; they have ears but they hear not; neither is there breath in their mouth. They that make them are like unto them”* (Psalm 135:15-18). These idols are conceived in the mind of man.

Some of you say, Pastor Schultze, I don’t have any such idols. Well, you may not have *made* such an idol, but perhaps someone else has made one for you, and you have purchased it. Dick Hillis, missionary to China preaching in the United States, was approached by a man saying, “I am glad that we have no idols in this country.” Hillis responded “Oh yes we do! I saw one in your yard. It is your boat.” The boat kept the man from church. Fortunately, this man soon saw the Light. He sold his boat and gave the money to missions. Oh my friends, do you think he will have any regrets when he stands before the Judgment seat of Christ? Let there be nothing between your soul and your Savior. Yes, whatever keeps you from God, from prayer meeting, or from Christian service is an idol. It is amazing how many men can pour thousands of dollars into boats, cars, hobbies, and sports, but are not “able” to pay a meager standard tithe. My friend, payday some day.

Your children can be your idols. Some parents follow their children to every basketball game and concert instead of making their children follow them to every prayer service and revival meeting. There will be consequences unto the third and fourth generation. You cannot cheat God. How long did Abraham have to wait for Isaac? He was nearly 100 years of age. In his old age, it was his natural tendency to pamper his son. God had a quick fix for this. He told him to offer his only son on the altar of sacrifice. Every so often, God will run his hand around us to see if there are any strings attaching our hearts to anything that prevents us from letting Jesus be first. Have you laid your son and your daughter on the altar of sacrifice so God could have His way with them? Have you followed the example of Abraham and of Hannah (the mother of Samuel), and connected your child with God? How many Christmas letters are nothing but reports of

proud parents trumpeting the earthly accomplishments of their children, having nothing to say about their spiritual progress and conquests for Jesus? This tells me that these parents worship their children. Friend, we live in a world of idolatry, and we don't know it.

When Paul went to Athens, his spirit was stirred when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry (Acts 17:16). It is believed there were about 30,000 idols on Mars Hill at the time. Are we stirred about how many idols church people have? Just listen to them talk when the preacher is not there. You get the idea. For many people being in sports or watching them on TV is an idol. They would not miss it for anything. It is here and not in God where they receive their greatest pleasure. Brothers and sisters, the Lord has commissioned us to make disciples of all men. All of us are called to this great commission. What are you doing about it? What progress are you making? Being in style, dressing attractively can be someone's idol. Keeping a house spotless can be an idol if it is at the expense of not keeping a heart spotless. Other idols may be golf, fishing, or relatives. It can be anything that keeps a Christian from interceding for and winning souls, or from being faithful to the House of God.

Idols can be material things or they can be self-satisfying schemes. Idols can be philosophical or religious positions. An obsession to project a certain self-image, to appear smart or beautiful, wise or wealthy, well educated or successful can be idolatrous. Our idols entice us, conquer us, obsess us, deceive us, rob us, exhaust us, distract us, imprison us, corrupt us and then, eventually, when they have totally exploited us, stick a knife into our backs and cast us into the pit of shame. Let us drive our idols out and serve God only.

Idols blind us from seeing the God of revelation Who made us, Who understands us; Whose love brought us out of Egypt and demands our undivided worship, praise and adoration forever. He is God, the only God Who can truly bless us and give us the joy for which our hearts are yearning. Friend, your idol will always leave your soul empty.

"O Thou who art my life and stay, my best and truest friend.
I know Thy love will never fail, Thy mercy never end.
For thou art more to me than all thy gifts so free

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