

CHRISTIAN IDOLATRY

1 Corinthians 10:14 Colossians 3:1-7

Introduction: The Old Testament is filled with accounts of idolatry in all the nations and even God's own people, Israel became involved time after time. In our time there are still countries that worship idols in some way or other. In the Christian faith there is no idolatry or any form thereof, so we all say, however in the eyes of God there is a form of idolatry that most Christians are guilty of at one time or other.

There is outward idolatry which is the actual bowing down before an image of some sort as Israel did while waiting for Moses to come down from Mt. Sinai. That same bowing down before images is still being done today as the worshippers of Buddha do and many other beliefs with their images.

There is the inward worship of idolatry called "covetousness" which Christians are concerned with today. The definition of "covetousness" is an "excessive desire for worldly gain that distracts from God..." What Christian can say that he/she has never been pulled away from God because of wanting things too much?

I. INWARD IDOLATRY (COVETOUSNESS) CAN BE RECOGNIZED

1. **2 Timothy 3:1-4** speaks of an excessive love for pleasure.
 - Everyone has something that he/she loves to do more than anything else for pleasure.
 - Fishing, hunting, golfing, internet, reading, movies, traveling
 - Almost anything and everything is an "outlet" a hobby for somebody.
 - No matter how harmless the "outlet" or hobby seems, if it is put before God, then it becomes an idol and is treated as such, even if unconsciously.
2. **John 12:42-43** speaks of one's love for worldly approval, applause.
 - Who doesn't love to receive praise, to be bragged upon. Everyone does, face it.
 - However, if a person seeks to gain such approval, attention more than giving God the credit, the honor, the glory for what was done, then this becomes an idol and is put ahead of God.
3. **Luke 12:19** speaks of the desire for personal comfort.
 - Who doesn't want to have a "cushion," some extra money in the bank?
 - There is nothing wrong with a Christian being financially secure, but when one puts his/her own personal interest and comfort ahead of trusting God, then that desire becomes an idol.
 - When a person has to "catch-up" on this or that minor job and uses God's Day, when a person cannot attend worship because of the weather but can go to work under the same condition, or go visit somebody, then God is not first in that person's life and something or someone is put ahead of Him, then that is idolatry.
4. A Christian can have an excessive desire for material things.
 - Most often it is not necessity that causes one to work the many hours that he/she works and therefore is too tired to be involved in God's Church activities, but it is a desire to have this or that which is not actually needed, but just wanted.

- This desire to have that takes the place of God being first in a person's life is nothing more than idolatry.

II. INWARD IDOLATRY IS ALSO SELFISHNESS

1. When a Christian fails to give God the tithe (tenth) it is selfishness.
 - It is the habit of most Christians to give God's tithe last, if there's anything left.
 - Some say that "when I get caught up, I'll tithe" but they seldom if ever do.
 - So many take what belongs to God and spend it for themselves, thus being selfish.
 - This is inward idolatry.
2. When a person loves his/her own self more than God this is inward idolatry.
 - A person will talk about him/herself and his/her family and just about everything but refuse to talk about God and His Son Jesus, this is nothing more than selfishness.
3. When a person allows, places anything between him/herself and God, this is inward idolatry.

III. WHAT IS SO WRONG WITH INWARD IDOLATRY?

1. **"...Thou shalt have none other gods..." (Exodus 20:5)**
 - NONE means just that NONE!
 - Not a material thing, not an invisible thing, not a desire, not anything is to take God's place.
2. **Exodus 20:5** says that God is a jealous God and if anyone lets something come between him/her and God, beware! God will not allow it.
3. **Romans 15:2-3** teaches us that even Jesus, Himself, didn't come into this world to please Himself, but to please God. Jesus tells everyone to worship God and God only.
4. Everything that is placed between a person and God will be weighed in the balance scales and everything that a person worships, whether inwardly or outwardly will be compared to Jesus Christ. **"...What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36)**

CONCLUSION:

1. Many are foolishly placing things between themselves and God, forgetting that God MUST come first in every aspect of a person's life.
2. Fellowship with God is lost. Blessings are missed. Disobedience is active. Others suffer loss when a Christian is guilty of inward idolatry.
3. Christian, take an inventory. What is taking God's first place in your life?