

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

Flee From Idolatry

1 Corinthians 10:14

1. A **Definition** of Idolatry

An idol can be anything that has been made by God or formed by man, with his mind or his hands, which then displaces God from His deserved position of primacy in affection, fear, or awe (Ex. 20:4; Ezek. 14:3; Rom 1:25; cf. Isa. 44:9ff; Ps. 115:4ff; Matt 10:28). Idolatry can be any activity or attitude where conformity to God's will, obedience to God's commands, or the adoration of God Himself is prioritized below some other goal or desire.

2. A **Description** of Idolatry

A. It Maligns the **Identity** of God (Ex. 20:2)

Any understanding of God wherein He is not honored as the God revealed in both the Old and New Testaments (Ex. 3:6; Luke 20:37-38) is an idolatrous image of God. There is only one God (Deut 6:4) who revealed Himself to Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff) and chose Israel as His special people (Ezek. 20:5). God exists in the three co-equal and co-eternal Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To identify God in any other way is to deny who He is and who He has revealed Himself to be, and is to be guilty of idolatry.

B. It Displaces the **Primacy** of God (Ex. 20:3)

The foremost commandment of the Law is that men are to love God fully and with the totality of their being (Deut. 6:5; Mk. 12:29). Jesus warned against loving anything so much that it competes with love of God (Matt 6:24). Money (1 Tim 6:10), people (Matt. 10:37), or any good or wicked thing can be elevated to a position of idolatry.

C. It Distorts the **Worship** of God (Ex. 20:4-5)

There were two times in the early years of the Exodus that God dealt harshly with those who sought to worship Him in ways that were not prescribed (Ex. 32:1ff; Lev. 10:1ff). Idolatry and other kinds of worship that is abhorrent to God can happen when people try to worship Him in ways that He has forbidden or otherwise not prescribed.

3. A **Departure** from Idolatry

Worship of the true God is incompatible with the worship of idols (1 Thess. 1:9). The warning of the danger of idolatry is repeated often because men are prone to it (cf. 1 Cor. 10:14; 1 John 5:21).