



How Satan Gains Access to Work in our Lives

Part 3: Idolatry

In our last issue we looked at the role that occult activities play in giving evil spirits access to our lives. In this issue we will look at the closely related area of idolatry. Certainly giving abeyance to any other “god” than Jehovah is another way of committing spiritual “adultery” (Ezek. 23:37). It is intensely offensive to God but greatly pleases Satan, again opening the door for his evil spirits to work in our lives.

Usually when we think of idolatry, we think of pagan idols of wood, stone, and metal, which no Christian would think of worshipping. This horrible practice was what motivated God to send severe judgment against the nation of Israel. Even in the Old Testament, however, Ezekiel taught that idolatry can be a matter of the heart and be just as offensive to God. In fact, God says He will set His face against anyone practicing idolatry in his heart, cancelling blessings and not responding to his prayers (Ezek. 14:2-8).

Idolatry of the heart can take many forms, some of which may be difficult to recognize and thus all the more dangerous to our spiritual health. Even such high priority issues as family, job, ministry, or health can become idols if we are not willing to sacrifice or put them in jeopardy to be obedient to God.

Other issues that can creep into idol status include behavioral compulsions that evidence themselves in an undue emphasis on appearance, cleanliness, orderliness, performance, or control. Usually these reflect psychological baggage acquired from childhood and may be difficult to turn from without knowledgeable and supportive inner healing directed at the root issues driving these behaviors.

Addictions are another psychological issue that can arise out of deep, unresolved pain from the past and take on idol status. Drugs, alcohol, nicotine, gambling, sex, and pornography are more obvious types of such addictions, but food and work, or constant busyness, can also be addictive behaviors used to drown out pain. In reality, they are taking the place of God, who is able to bring true healing to our deep emotional wounds (Isa. 61:1-3). This does not mean that prayer and faith alone are always sufficient to overcome an addiction, however. Often knowledgeable and compassionate help is again needed to ascertain the deep, inner roots of pain the person is endeavoring to escape and then to identify the false beliefs imbedded in them so that God can transform them through the application of truth. This is the truth that will set the person free (John 8:32).

The most frequent and grievous idols of the heart are those that arise out of the interaction of our inherent sin nature, or flesh, and the world system in which we are engulfed, both of which are prime avenues through which Satan works (Rom. 8:6-8; Gal. 5:17). A potential idol of this nature that Scripture particularly warns us about concerns our attitude towards money and material gain. Money is a powerful and alluring commodity, capable of providing security, prestige, and entertainment. The world system is so totally built around the attainment of these things that even Christians are apt to forget that God is infinitely more capable of supplying these for us and has promised to do so if we simply make Him and His righteousness the highest priority in our lives (Mat. 6:33; Phil. 4:19). If we choose to trust in money, rather than God, to supply our needs and give us security for the future, we are engaged in the idolatry of mammon. We have put money in the place of God. Scripture clearly

states that we cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24) and equates a quest for material possessions (greed and covetousness) with idolatry (Col. 3:5-6).

Because idols of the heart can be so insidious, we would all do well to examine our lives and take stock of what is most important to us. If any of these identified priorities could not be laid aside to do God's will, it needs to be recognized as an idol of the heart. If it is an issue that is serving as a psychological "crutch" for us, we need to seek out the right kind of help to explore its root. If it is any other issue, the godly response is to confess our sin to God (1 John 1:9), submit to His will and priorities for us (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 2:10), and ask Him to break off any connections to the evil spiritual realm that were established in our lives because of this unrecognized "idol." Not only is He faithful to do this, but He will also open the door to greater blessings coming into our lives because of our uncompromised devotion to Him (Rom. 8:28-39).