

The Old Paths

Volume 12, Issue 7

April 17, 2005

“Flee From Idolatry”

Jarrod Jacobs

When God spoke to Isaiah, He made it clear that there were some who were wasting their time and efforts, for they were guilty of worshipping idols. God said that those guilty of idolatry were “all of them vanity.” Their pleasant, precious things, these idols they had made, “shall not profit.” “They see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed” (Isa. 44:9). This was God’s pronouncement against the idolaters, His own people. Therefore, Isaiah spoke the word of the Lord, telling Israel, “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.... Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any” (Isa. 44:6, 8). Isaiah 44:9-20 records a cutting rebuke to these people who continued in their foolishness by worshipping idols.

As we read Isaiah chapter 44, Isaiah describes the making of an idol and how the people “shall be ashamed (put to shame, ASV, NAS) together” (Isa. 44:11). Why would they be put to shame? Because once the idols were revealed for what they were, the people would be ashamed at

their conduct.

Isaiah begins by showing them the “smith” who fashions the axe, working and sweating around the hot coals; hungering, thirsting, and becoming “faint” or weary so that the carpenter may have his axe to chop the wood (Isa. 44:12). Next, we see the man who selects a tree, then marks and cuts a figure out of the wood which resembles a man. This figure will remain in his house (v. 13). In these verses, we see a man who has chosen a tree he did not plant, nourished by rain he did not send (v. 14), and begins to cut the tree in pieces. The man takes part of the tree to warm himself, another part goes for cooking his food, and the last part of the tree is used as an idol, which this man worships, saying, “Deliver me, for thou art my god” (Isa. 44:15-17).

How foolish!! God makes it clear that “None considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (Isa. 44:19-20).

How sad to see people so foolish as this. Unfortunately, people are still like this today. We have modern-day idolaters among us who don’t even realize it! They do not “consider [their] ways” (Hag.

1:5, 7).

How can I say that we have modern-day idolaters today? In order to answer this question, let us ask another question. Namely, “What is involved in idolatry?” First, there is the denial of God. The people had done this in Isaiah’s day, and folks continue to do it today. Many deny God through their actions on a daily basis (Tit. 1:16). Christ said that if we deny Him, He will deny us (Matt. 10:33). The people in Isaiah’s day denied God, and some were saying that a stick had delivered them!! How are we any better when we in this society go the next step farther by saying that there is nothing greater than man, and that we are here by accident (i.e., the theory of evolution)?

Second, consider the selfishness involved in idolatry. In Isaiah 44, the man cut the tree down for himself. He cut wood for his warmth. He burned wood to cook his food. Finally, he bowed down to worship the idol he made!! It was something he made, to please himself. In this life, we do not live for self-gratification, but to please God (Ecc. 12:13-14; Acts 10:34-35)! A life of selfishness is a wasted life.

Covetousness is also involved in idolatry (Col. 3:5). Paul said, “covetousness ... is idolatry.” Covetousness is defined as, “avarice, extortion, greediness” (Strong’s). Therefore, anything that we place as “first and foremost” in our lives above God becomes our idol. This could be a family member (Matt. 10:37), a thing (drugs/ alcohol, etc.), money (I Tim. 6:10), our own thoughts, our body, entertainment, etc. Anything that would take the place of God becomes our idol, whether or not we literally bow down to it!

Can we see how foolish idolatry is? Simply put, idolatry is the religion of

sight in opposition to that of faith. Knowing that we “walk by faith, not by sight” (II Cor. 5:7), how dare we submit ourselves to anything less than God (I Cor. 6:12)? Certainly, everything we have named thus far (family, money, self, possessions, trees, drugs, etc.) is less than God.

Let us learn and learn well these lessons of the past (Rom. 15:4). We can fall into the same traps that snared the people in Isaiah’s day if we are not careful! Friends, “flee from idolatry” (I Cor. 10:14)!!

Is One As Good As Another?

Jarrold Jacobs

- ◆ When you were seeking a wife, was one just as good as another?
- ◆ When the doctor prescribed a particular medicine, was one just as good as another?
- ◆ When you paid the cashier, was one amount just as good as another?
- ◆ When the realtor handed you the keys to your new house, was one house just as good as another?
- ◆ When you picked up your child at school, was one child just as good as another?

Obviously, we would never say that one child, medicine, house, or spouse is as good as another. Yet, many will say, “One church is as good as another.” Why is this? Christ shed His blood for His church (Acts 20:28). How could another church be “just as good”? When one belongs to another church, it is not “as good as” His church!

Let us beware of all who say, “One church is just as good as another.” The Lord did not teach this (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; Rom. 16:16)!!

Why 99.9% Just Won't Do

Is it truly necessary to go for “zero defects”? Why isn’t 99.9% defect free good enough? This is what life would be like if things were done right 99.9% of the time.

We’d have to accept:

- One hour of unsafe drinking water a month.
- Two unsafe plane landings per day at O’Hare International airport in Chicago.
- 16,000 pieces of mail lost by the U.S. Postal Service every hour.
- 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions per year.
- 500 incorrect surgical operations each week.
- 50 newborns dropped at birth by doctors.
- 22,000 checks deducted from the wrong bank accounts each hour.
- 32,000 missed heart beats per person per year.

Suddenly, the quest for zero defects makes a lot of sense!

(From: **Jeff DeWar, Quality Control Specialist, Teamworks, Inc.**)

Editor’s Note:

I received this article a few years back, and I think it’s overall theme is a valid one. When one reads this article, he can easily make an appli-

cation spiritually, noting that when he settles by not giving 100% in God’s service, he is also asking for problems!

As I write this, I want to be clear that I am not saying that there is a way for man to “earn” his way into Heaven. That is not the point or purpose of this article, for no man can “earn” such a gift (Rom. 6:23b). At the same time, we need to recognize that God expects folks to give their all (100%) in service to Him (Lk. 17:10)! We are told that since Christ died for us, we must live for Him (II Cor. 5:14-15; Rom. 12:1-2)! The apostle Paul understood this and declared that he was, “crucified with Christ,” and that he lived his life, “by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

We are bond-servants of Christ (Rom. 8:16-18). As such, this means that we love and serve Him totally — 100%! Sadly, Satan wants folks to lower their standards and be negligent in the work of the Lord, even if it is just a “little bit.” When we are tempted to do this, I hope we will look back to this little “checklist” and see the dangers posed in society when we settle for 99.9% rather than 100%. If such danger lurks physically when we settle for less than 100%, how much more spiritual danger do we expose ourselves and others to when we settle for less than 100% in our commitment and faithfulness to God? -JJ

“Let The Bible Speak”

www.southside-churchofchrist.com



I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!

Come and meet with the church at Southside.
Our address is: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303.

MEETING TIMES:

Sunday Morning Bible Study _____ **9:30 am**
Sunday Morning Worship _____ **10:20 am**
Sunday Evening Worship _____ **6:00 pm**
Wednesday Evening Bible Study _____ **7:00 pm**

Our call-in radio program is on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-9246 (WBIO)** with your Bible question.

Preacher/Editor: Jarrold Jacobs

Elders: Paul Dubois & Jeff Lankford

Phone: (270) 683-5386

Website address: www.southside-churchofchrist.com (Updated weekly!)