

The Old Paths

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“Another God”

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David stated in Psalm 16, *“Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god...”* (Ps. 16:4). Living in the time he did, he was familiar with idolatrous practices. Unfortunately, idolatry was not uncommon among the Jews. Though they often opposed the idolatry of the Gentiles (Canaanites, Egyptians, etc.), history tells us that Abraham’s father was an idolater (Josh 24:2), and the idolatry of Egypt was something the Israelites did not give up easily (Ex. 32; Ezek. 16:26). Therefore, as David penned this psalm, he reminds the people of the “sorrow” that comes from going after false gods. To aid in our study, please consider some other versions below, and how they translate Psalm 16:4.

- ♦ *“The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods”* (NIV).
- ♦ *“Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows”* (NRS).
- ♦ *“The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied”* (NAS).
- ♦ *“Their sorrows shall be multiplied that give gifts for another god”* (ASV).

David understood the dangers of idolatry, I wonder if we realize today how dangerous idolatry is?

Idolatry Is Alive And Well Today.

Have we considered the fact that idolatry is rampant today? In simple terms, idolatry is the religion of sight in opposition to that of faith. For this reason, idolatry can take many forms. Some, of course, practice idolatry through the worship of nature, the sun, the moon, and worship of the various elements of this earth, etc. They may carve wooden or stone statues and worship these as gods. This has been done since Old Testament days (Jer. 10:1-5; Isa. 44:9-20). People today such as Wiccans and others, practice such idolatry in a worship of nature and the earth. Besides this, we know that Catholics have their own idols — statues to which they bow down (Mary, the apostles, their appointed “saints,” etc.), and pray for various reasons. Those who worship Buddha are idolaters as well. There are other examples of this as well that can be seen in our “modern” world.

There is another form of idolatry which is more subtle. This is because these idolaters have nothing that they literally fall down and worship. This idolatry is seen among those who are covetous (Col. 3:5). To be covetous is “to set the heart upon, i.e. long for (rightfully or otherwise): desire, would fain, lust (after)” (Strong’s). In this case, the coveting (longing, lusting, desiring) is something evil. It is an inordinate desire for something. Those who are idolatrous in this way may put themselves, their

mother, father, children, their hobbies, work, or anything else before God. If one sets his heart upon, or longs for these things, instead of God, then he/ she is idolatrous according to Colossians 3:5. Such a person is just as much an idolater as the person who literally falls down and worships the stick or statue. Yes, friends, idolatry is alive and well!

The Result Of Idolatry.

Turning our attention to Psalm 16:4 again, David said that “sorrows” will “be multiplied” for those guilty of idolatry. In applying this to ourselves, we see that putting ourselves, or anything else before God does not result in happiness, but sorrow.

Many today promote the philosophy that one needs to put his care, joy, needs, and desires first in order to have a happy life. How many times have we heard people say, “Do what makes you happy”? How many times have we heard people say, “Do what is best for you”? This type of thinking lends itself to selfishness, pride, and idolatry, for one has put his wishes before the will of God. When one places himself, or anything else before God, he is covetous (Col. 3:5), and will experience sorrow in his life rather than joy.

Paul told Timothy, *“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (I Tim. 6:9-10). The apostle also told Timothy that people who would love money, or who put worldly riches before all “fall into

temptation," and they will "drown ... in destruction and perdition" (ruin and destruction, NAS). These people err "from the faith" and pierce "themselves through with many sorrows"! Why is this so? One of the main reasons why this is so is because these people have made money/ possessions their god (idol). When they die, and enter eternity, they will have no treasure "laid up" (Matt. 6:19-21, 16:26). When this world ends finally, their "god" will be gone (I Jn. 2:17). Then what?

Friends, more people and nations have been sacrificed to this god of money/ possessions than we would like to admit. Think about how folks' interest in this country are often pointed toward our economy than on our moral standing. Often, leaders in this country are praised for their position on how to make more money for others, while their positions on what is truly important is played-down. Sadly, there are so-called "Christians," so-called members of the Lord's body who fall for this type of thinking, too. The drive for more and more possessions causes many to sacrifice their souls and what is most important. The love of money and possessions, though temporarily satisfying, results in "many sorrows," destruction, and perdition.

The reason why covetousness and similar things bring sorrow is because that is all they can do! God is light (I Jn. 1:5; Jas. 1:17) and love (I Jn. 4:8). God gives joy (Ecc. 2:26) and life (I Jn. 5:11; Tit. 1:2; Rom. 6:23). Therefore, if one rejects God in favor of anything else, what can they have in their lives except darkness, hate, sorrow, and death? Yes, there is temporary "pleasure" to be realized in sin

(Heb. 11:25), but true joy is not to be found here, but in God and in Christ.

Since the result of idolatry is sorrow, why would we want any part of this? We need to make sure we are putting our Lord and His kingdom first in order that we can enjoy the blessings God has given to us (Matt. 6:33; Eph. 1:3).

We Need To Get As Far Away As We Can From Idolatry.

In the last part of Psalm 16:4 we read David's statement that he would not "take up their names into my lips." In other words, David was so opposed to these gods or idols under consideration, that he would not even speak their names. This was in keeping with the law of God. Moses had told the people to "make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth" (Ex. 23:13). Joshua told the Israelites not to "make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them." Rather, they were to "cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day" (Josh. 23:7-8).

Rather than seeing how close we can get to sin and error without actually being guilty of sin, let us get

far away from it! Since God has drawn the line between right and wrong, let us respect that line, and leave it alone! By transgressing God's will and worshipping the "gods" of my design, I am asking for nothing but sorrow, darkness, and death. Who would want to live their life knowing that this is their end?

Conclusion

Let us fight against covetousness (idolatry) by putting to death the old man of sin, and by living anew in Christ (Col. 3:5-14; Rom. 6:3-6). Let us be a "living sacrifice" for God (Rom. 12:1-2), and "crucified with Christ" that Christ will live in us (Gal. 2:20). In all that we say and do, let us do it "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" that we might see Heaven when this life is over (Col. 3:17; Matt. 7:21). David shows us that sorrows will be multiplied to those who go after these false gods (idols). Who can deny it? With this in mind, is it any wonder that when we turn to the New Testament, we read the apostle Paul's command to "flee idolatry" (I Cor. 10:14)? Let us obey the Lord and do what John told us to do and "keep (oneself) from idols" (I Jn 5:21).

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"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16)