

FLEE FROM IDOLATRY!

(Scripture: 1John 5:20,21)

Introduction: The very first commandment of ten commandments is “thou shalt have no God before me. God warns us very clearly that He is a very jealous God and has no tolerance for such iniquity! We saw His anger in the history of Israel repeatedly. God will not share His honor, glory with anyone. Anytime we try to bring two or more gods, it becomes polytheistic idolatry. This passage is a warning for everyone, for the believers, as well as the nonbelievers! Let us heed to John’s admonition concerning idolatry in this passage today.

1 John 5:20.

20And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, (in His Son Jesus Christ). This is the true God and eternal life.

Here is final confession from John. It is an interesting verse. Let us read it together carefully. All the scholars agree, “we may know Him” and “we are in Him” points to God, the Father, but the last statement, “This is the true God and eternal life” points to whom? Whom does that “true God” refers to? To Son of God Jesus Christ or God the Father? Scholars are split over it.

There is another verse that is very similar to this one. Jesus, in His prayer to God, the Father, calls Him, only true God.

John 17:3

3“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

‘True’ here means’ genuine, real, as opposed to the *false* gods.

John 17:3 strikingly resembles 1 John 5:20 and it points to God, the Father as true God.

There are only very few passages in the Bible that says explicitly or implicitly that Jesus is God and we can count them with our fingers, most of those passages come from John.

I and the Father are one. (Same essence and same substance. Like Father, like Son).

My Lord, My God! (Thomas confession)

Though He (Jesus) was equal with God! (Phil. 2:6). I quote this verse again and again to prove the divinity of Jesus! Same essence and same substance of God!
He that hath seen me hath seen my Father also!

Mighty God, Eternal Father! (Isaiah 9:6)
Emmanuel, God with us.

The Word was with God, and the Word was God! (John 1:1)

John 1:18¹⁸No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God* who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

* some manuscripts has, "the only Son".

This is a very good verse to argue that Jesus is God if that is the right manuscript!

But there are numerous passages that will clearly portray God as Father, and Jesus Christ as the Lord, and Son of God! I'll just quote a few now:

Ephesians. 4:4,5.

*4There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling.
5one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

1 Corinthians. 11:3

3But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Romans. 15:6

6so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 8:6

6yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

Throughout the New Testament, most of the time, Father will be addressed as God, the Father, and the Son would be addressed as Lord Jesus Christ.

The important creed is. "That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," who was with the Father from all eternity, and He came down from heaven, and the Word became flesh! This is the very foundation of John's teaching in Gospel and all the Epistles, and the entire New Testament. Yes, we must insist on the divinity of Jesus without confusing His title.

We are saved by confessing Jesus as Lord, and not by confessing Jesus as God!

Romans 10:9

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

But if we insist on using the title, Jesus as God, then we must use the Trinity doctrine appropriately to validate our point! Many people will not be able to understand the Trinitarian doctrine. Muslim religion came because of Trinitarian disputes. Hindus will question too. If you worship 3 gods why can't we have 3 gods or 3 million gods? We unnecessarily open the Pandora's box for unnecessary arguments. Why can't we just follow the Scripture order?

Jews insists that there is only one God. According to them, anything besides that God is an idol?

Many unbelievers have no idea about Jesus' divinity. They first think that Jesus is a good teacher, or prophet. Very few start seeing Him as Son of God and Lord. It is easier to share to them God as Father, and Son of God, Jesus as their Lord.

Bible makes it very easy for us to present God as Father, and Jesus as Lord, and Son of God. But if you feel that you must share Jesus as God, then be prepared thoroughly to present the complicated Trinitarian doctrine. Without the proper explanation of Trinitarian doctrine, it will end up as idolatry. Beware of that! The choice is yours. We could boldly talk about Jesus as God among the believers, but it may not be a good idea to cast the pearl before the unbelievers.

Speaking of idol, the next verse is about idol for some reason! Let us heed to this admonition.

1 John 5:21

Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Note the tenderness of John for his sheep. He calls the believers, "little children!" The ones who follow Jesus Christ, and loves one another are indeed the children of God, and they are the true brothers and sisters, parents, and children! Church is a close-knit family. It is not a community center.

John was very old. According to history, he was the last Apostle to die. He had every right to call them as little children! Paul had planted the church of Ephesus, then Apollos went there. Timothy was a Bishop for a while there. But somehow, Apostle John came there, and he became the elder of that church.

City of Ephesus was full of idolatry. The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world! The temple worship in those days had everything a man would desire. It had plenty of food offerings, lot of alcohol, abundant temple prostitutes for pleasure, music, raucous demonic shameless dance party, going into trances and forgetting about themselves, having a form of godliness but not having any real spiritual power at all. They tried to look spiritual, but it was all fleshly! There was one more unique quality about this temple of Diana. It was an asylum for the criminals! Any criminal who reached here was safe! So, this temple was indeed a den of thieves, and a place of immorality!

So, these popular idols brought lot of side pleasures that tempted even the believers. Corinthians were pulled by these idol worship. Moreover, the meat market was in the temple area only. So, the temptation of food, alcohol, women were too much. They did not look at it as adultery. It was a casual affair. As belly was fed with food, they fed their body with these pleasures. As the proverb goes, food for the belly, and the belly for the food! John gave a stern warning to stay away from these things! Christians may not have directly participated in idol worship, but they may have indulged in peripheral activities surrounding the temple! That is called flirting with sin. It would not be easy for a Christian to keep himself from idols in a city like that. But John demands that it must be done, and the Christians can only keep this commandment if they love Christ more than anything in this world!

An idol is anything that takes first place in a person's life, anything that a person puts before God! An idol is anything that consumes a man's focus and concentration, that consumes his energy and efforts more than God. A person can make an idol out of anything in this world. It could be our: Houses, lands, job, position, wives, children, cars, boats, sports, money, comfort, television, sex, food, power, possessions, pleasures, recreation etc.

We may be doing the same thing. We may become fixated on something! It could be prescription drugs, alcohol, compulsive gambling, movies, video games, music, shopping, Facebook, WhatsApp. etc. We spend hours and hours on these things, and if we spend few minutes for the Lord, it is a huge sacrifice! There is nothing wrong with some of those activities,

but when it becomes obsessive compulsive in our life, and we start neglecting people, and our loving God slowly, it can become our idol. We need to make sure, God is first in our lives! John clearly warns us that the lust of the eyes, flesh, and the pride of life can easily become our idols. Beware!

Jesus wanted to teach this lesson to Peter. John chapter 21 was a grand finish to this wonderful gospel book! There was fellowship with food served by the best chef of the universe, Jesus Christ, our Lord! There was a serious calling for Peter. He was confronted 3 times if he loved Jesus more than anything! (Do you love me more than these?). In other words, there must be no room for idols in his heart to serve Jesus. Then Peter was commissioned to feed the sheep and lay down his life for them!

Jesus is calling each one of us as He called out Peter. Do you love Jesus more than anything in this world? Is any idol stopping you from coming closer to Him? Examine yourself!

Conclusion:

There is but one God, God the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.

Anything can become an idol. Beware of it.

We must love Jesus more than anything in this world. We must place Jesus as the first in our life. That is the only way, we can get rid of our idols!

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