

IDOLS OF THE HEART

Ezekiel 14:1-5

ME

GOD: Scripture reveals the root... idolatry.

The greatest burden of the Old Covenant prophets, the message they preached again + again, was to call the people of God away from the Ashtoreths + the Baals. Pagan gods of other nations. But God's people over and over returned to them or allowed their presence to remain. Prophets called to Israel to this, over and over. Eventually, because of their stubborn idolatry, God sovereignly appointed Nebuchadnezzar II to capture Judah + exile them to Babylon.

- Setting for Ezekiel: Babylonian captivity or Israel (6th C BC).
- Ezekiel the priest was among the captives.
- Some of the elders, the leaders of Judah, had come to inquire about God through Ezekiel.
- Spiritual action, symbolic of a desire to hear from God.
- God sees the hearts of the elders and tells Ezekiel...
 1. Elders set up idols in their hearts. Invisible to people, God saw their motives.
 2. They set up stumbling blocks of their iniquity before their face (committed to iniquity)
- God tells Ezekiel to declare that when people have idols + committed to iniquity, that God will answer according to their idol + iniquity, even though they are seeking something from God.
- The reason for this: the LORD knows that commitment to idols+stumbling blocks will lead to ruin. The only way to dislodge idols is to allow them to experience the misery idols bring life + turn to God.

Ezekiel 14:1-6, “**1** Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. **2** And the word of the LORD came to me: **3** “Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them? **4** Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols, **5** that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols. **6** “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!

1. WHAT IS AN IDOL OF THE HEART?
2. WHAT IS MY HEART IDOL?
3. REPENT BY THE GOSPEL.

WHAT IS AN IDOL OF THE HEART?

Definitions:

- **John Calvin**, hundreds of years ago, “Man’s nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols.”
- **Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, definition of an idol.** “An idol is anything in my life that occupies a place that should be occupied by God alone... An idol is something that holds such a controlling position in my life that it moves and rouses and attracts me so easily that I give my time, attention, and money to it effortlessly.”
- Simply put, an idol is whatever or whoever you and I give central value to in our lives.
 - **Speaking invitation:** “Ignite” assumes that passion needs to be fanned into flame. Wrong. There is a blazing passion, but for what? You are passionate about something else!
- **An idol is any THING/ PERSON that controls your thoughts, money, choices, decisions, emotions.**

Something Good into something Ultimate.

- Usually it's a good thing that we make an ultimate things. Thus they become false saviors we worship.
- Idolatry can take the form of anything: spouse, kids, job, health, beauty, pets, furniture, wardrobe.
- There is **nothing sinful** about them, in and of themselves.

As we Worship idols, they control

- **The problem:** When good things are elevated to ultimate, they rule over us. Instead of being a gift from God as intended to be, our hearts twist them into counterfeit gods... we give our time, money, and life.
 - **When they dissolve, our hearts dissolve.**
- **Rebecca Pipert,** "Whatever controls us is our lord. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by acceptance. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our lives."
 - Everything we DO is motivated by the HEART.
 - ALL SIN is the evidence of a HEART IDOL. Idols are the reason for sin.
- **Are you Spiritually stuck?** Perhaps you have a **Superficial Gospel of forgiveness, not ERADICATION.**
 - Taking care of the lawn + killing weeds. Cutting grass temporarily makes my lawn look good. But it's temporary + weeds grow back more aggressively. You have to kill the root by spreading root killing pellets.
 - Taking care of the our spiritual life + killing sin. Confessing + asking for forgiveness gives me relief. But it's temporary + sin returns more aggressively. You have to kill the root at the heart level by addressing idolatry.
 - **3** "Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them?"
 - **Heart idols generate sin actions:** Stumbling blocks make you fall is a result of heart idols...
 - **"before their faces"** can't see God... no intimacy, relationship, guidance... **HAT!**

WHAT IS MY HEART IDOL? (2 answers; surface + deep)

SURFACE IDOLS:

- Easily recognizable as they're on the surface: money, sex, work, family, relationships, etc.

QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY (SURFACE) IDOLS

1. What do you long for or think about passionately?
2. Where do you run to for comfort?
3. What are you most afraid of losing?
4. What makes you happiest?
5. What do you brag about?
6. What do you sacrifice the most for in your life?
7. Whose approval, love or acceptance do you seek?
8. Xns: What causes you to neglect God or 'sin'?
9. Xns: Where in your life do you find 'sin'?

DEEP IDOLS

- The drive in our heart that is producing the surface idolatry. The idol beneath the idol.
- **Tim Keller,** "The idolatry structure of the heart is complex. There are deep idols within the heart beneath the more concrete and visible surface idols that we serve. We are often superficial in the analysis of our own idol structures."
- TK makes this classification between the surface idols and the deep idols.
 - **Genesis 3,** "You will be like God". You will desire the attributes of God without having them.
 1. **Power**
 2. **Glory (His glory encompasses pleasures + joy, not just visual)**
 3. **Honor**
 - **NUMA waitress: lying, Ivy league idolatry, Honor.**

Sexual Sin -> Person you idolize/ can't lose -> you find your Glory in him/ her.

Lying/ cheating/ Denying Christ -> People's approval -> Honor.

Stealing/ Insurance fraud -> Money -> Power

YOU: HOW DO I ERADICATE? (REPENT INSIDE-OUT + OUTSIDE-IN)

VS.6 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!

1John 5:20-21, “20 We know also 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—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.”

START WITH YOUR HEART (Inside-out by the Love of God in the Gospel)

- If you've identified surface idols, how do you begin to deal with them at the deep level?
- We're created as worshiping beings. We can't stop worshiping. Just getting rid of an idol makes room for another. Rather than trying to stop worshiping, turn to the ultimate good, Jesus and worship him.
- **Your heart was meant for God + will not be at rest until you find rest in him.**
- **HOW? The good news.**
 - **Rev. 4:11**, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”
 - **HE GAVE UP HONOR + GLORY + POWER... FOR YOU!**
 - **Abandon your aspirations at divinity.**
 - **HE DOESN'T ENSLAVE YOU... HIS LOVE COMPELS YOU.**
 - **Psalm 63:3** David says, “Your LOVE is BETTER than LIFE” !!

CONTINUE WITH ACTION (Outside-in by Action + Accountability)

- Take a break from relationship.
- Confess.

WE: What would your life look like? Growth... sin less! More love for Christ!