

As we continue our look at some of the symptoms of the sin sickness, we turn our attention to the beginning of Galatians 5:20. There we find two symptoms that can be seen within human religious activity. They are idolatry and sorcery.

Before we delve more deeply into these two issues, let's harken back to a passage we looked at several weeks ago. In Romans 1:22 we learned that the sin sickness was born out of man's decision to exchange worship and service of the Creator for worship and service of the created. It is important to recognize that this behavior is universal. It is not something from which any human being is immune.

Now, many people will claim to have never committed the sin of idolatry. The reason for this false claim is not necessarily deceit or a desire to avoid accountability and responsibility. In many cases, it is simply a misunderstanding of what constitutes idolatry. Remember, when man made the decision to exchange the truth for a lie and the Creator for the creation, our minds became darkened and what we perceive as our wisdom is actually foolishness.

Many, if not most, people are familiar with the 10 Commandments. And an honest person will admit that they have broken some of those commandments. But those same people will proclaim that while they have stolen, disobeyed their parents, coveted, taken the Lord's name in vain or dishonored the Sabbath, they have never committed idolatry. Their idea of idolatry is quite literal. When they make this claim, what they are saying is, "I have never constructed an idol in the image of a created being and worshipped it." However, idolatry is not just about physical idols; it's about a mindset.

Martin Luther, correctly pointed out that one cannot violate any of the 10 commandments without violating the first commandment: "You shall have no other God's before me." You see, in choosing to break one of the other nine commandments, we place ourselves as another god before God.

With that in mind, let us delve into the symptoms of idolatry and sorcery.

Scripture: Galatians 5:20a

I. Symptoms of the Sin Sickness: Religious Activity

A. Sorcery

1. *Pharmakeia*

a) From which we get our word "pharmacy"

(1) Potions & drugs used in occultic practices to alter the mind and/or communicate and control deities

2. "A secret tampering with and at times a worship of the powers of evil" [1]

3. Examples

a) Satanism

b) Occultic religions and practices

c) Magick

d) Witchcraft/Wicka

e) Astrology/Horoscopes

f) Tarot cards, Ouija boards, Séances

B. Idolatry

1. The worship of anything other than God

- a) Worship can be defined as: “[putting] your hope in something or someone and then [chasing] after it. [Holding] something up and then [giving] your life to pursuing it.” [1]
- b) What we set up as idols are not necessarily evil in themselves
 - (1) It is our attitude and devotion to them that makes them idols
 - (2) The problem is not with the “idol” but within the heart of the idolator
- 2. Examples
 - a) Food
 - (1) Comfort
 - (2) Consumption
 - (a) Overeating, Gluttony
 - (b) Diet and exercise
 - (3) Christ - “The bread of life”
 - b) Sex/Romance
 - (1) Obsession
 - (a) Pursuit of sexual pleasure outside of God’s will
 - (b) We look to another person to complete us
 - (2) Christ completes us, making us whole
 - c) Entertainment
 - (1) Read from *Gods at War* pp. 113-114
 - (2) Sports, celebrity, TV, movies, and video games
 - (3) Our joy is made complete in Christ
 - d) Money
 - (1) Securing
 - (a) Status and stuff
 - (2) Security
 - (a) Hope & dependence upon \$ rather than God
 - (3) Success/Significance (Self-esteem)
 - (a) Measured by bank balance rather than obedience to God
 - (b) Determined by earnings statements rather than by Christ’s sacrifice
 - e) Family
 - (1) Control
 - (a) Time
 - (b) Attitude
 - (2) The best thing we can do for our families is to be Christ centered
 - f) Self
 - (1) All forms of idolatry are rooted in self-idolatry
 - (a) Symptoms
 - (i) Arrogance
 - (ii) Insecurity

In 1964, a book entitled *The Three Christs of Ypsilanti* was published. It was based on a psychiatric case study performed by Dr. Milton Rokeach who was treating three patients who all suffered from delusions of grandeur. Each of the three men believed themselves to be Jesus Christ. The book details the doctor’s attempts to convince the men that they were not actually God in flesh.

One of the things he tried was having the men live together. They did this for about three years. Each afternoon they would have a group therapy session. The doctor hoped that living with other people who believed themselves to be Jesus would help the men come to reality.

You can imagine that this proved interesting.

One of the men would say, "I'm the Messiah, the Son of God. I was sent here to save earth."

"How do you know?" the doctor would ask.

"God told me," the patient would answer.

But then another of the patients would respond, "I never told you any such thing!"

Chaos would then ensue as the third man entered into the discussion. Ultimately, each "Christ" would assume that the other two men were simply patients in a mental hospital while he was the genuine Jesus. [1]

It sounds both hilarious and absurd. How could three people who live together all think they were Jesus? We would clearly and rightly call such people delusional, mad, crazy or insane. But the sad reality is that we live in a world filled with people who believe themselves to be their own God. And as frustrating as it is to live such a world, a world where everyone feels entitled to make their own rules and judgments on right and wrong, it is even more maddening when every person demands that you live by their moral judgments and ethics.

Does that describe you today? Are you trying to be God? Have you determined that someone or something other than God should be your source of comfort, joy, security, or pleasure? Are you looking to something or someone other than God to complete you? Are you allowing something or someone other than God to control you? If so, you are guilty of idolatry.

Our invitation is your time to come, confess, and repent of such behavior.

[i] *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Vol. 10*, (Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976). P. 496

[i] Idleman, Kyle. *Gods at War*. (Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 2013). P. 59

[i] *Ibid.*, p. 227-228