

Love – Life – Light

The End

Scripture Focus

1 John 5

Key Verse: 5:21

Introduction

We have come a long way in the book of 1 John. We have tackled some thorny issues that face each of us on a daily basis: love, life, walking in the light, obeying the commands of God and more. We have discovered that Jesus desires for us to live lives of HOLINESS (separation from the world system) and RIGHTEOUSNESS (keeping our relationships right with God and our brother).

Studying this book has been a tremendous challenge for me and I hope it has been a blessing for you. It challenged me to examine my relationships, my attitude; my walk with God and in the end has mostly challenged me to change! My only hope is that somehow the words of 1 John and the preaching have challenged you to grow in your relationship with God and your brother; and I pray it has challenged you to examine every aspect of your life so you may walk in holiness.

Today we will conclude our study of this book. Next week my wife will be speaking for us and I am sure you do not want to miss what the Lord will put upon her heart to say to this great congregation.

Let's read just one verse of scripture, which I believe is the key verse for this entire book.

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:21)

The end of a letter often states the most affectionate feeling toward the one the letter is addressed, for example, "Kind Regards," "Sincerely," "With Love," etc. John chooses to end his letter with 6 little words that reveal his true purpose for writing this book.

Remember

John is writing to a church that is in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was known around the world for its idols and idolatry. Ephesus was home to the temple of Diana and people made a living making and selling little statues of the goddess Diana to those who came to visit the temple where she was worshipped.

We are not far removed from the same problem as the people of Ephesus. We are prone to set up and worship idols in our time just as they were in their time.

Let's Describe What An Idol Is.

When most of us think of the word "idol" we typically think of a little statue or image that people set up in their home and in some way worship it. Or we think about the TV show "South African Idol" where people are worshipped for their talent or abilities. In reality both of these would be a right way to define what an idol is but scripturally there is a broader meaning.

The scriptures are full of warnings to the God's people not to give worship to idols. The truth is before Adam and Even fell there was no problem with idols but after man sinned – man also began looking for a way to create their own gods. This would lead God to make the #2 commandment say, *“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below (Exodus 20:4).”*

In the Old Testament there is really no singular definition of the word *idol* but it has several meanings...

- Isaiah 66:3 = emptiness, nothingness; vain, false, a wicked thing
- Jeremiah 50:38 = an object of horror or terror
- Leviticus 19:4 = a thing of naught, nonentity

In the Old and New Testament idols were typically made out of wood, stone or metal. We know these things cannot be god but for some odd reason we still tend to worship things made from wood, stone or metal even in our present day.

Let me just give you a real clear definition of what an idol is: **an idol is anything that you and I worship other than God!**

Colossians 3:5 tell us that sexual immorality; impurity, lust, evil desires and greed all fall under the category of idols. Why? Because we place our earthly desires in front of God and we seek to get our “meaning of life” from these things...think about it...

- Sexual immorality is an attempt to find meaning for our life through sexual relationships outside of marriage instead of looking to God for our purpose.
- Impurity, lust and evil desires are an attempt to find meaning in our life through our own efforts and manipulation rather than God.
- Greed is an attempt to find meaning in the things we can produce and earn rather than God.

In the end we will discover that all of these idols – these things we put in God’s place – are lifeless, nothing and useless compared to the greatness of God. They cannot bring us everlasting joy, peace, comfort, redemption, etc....

In the end we will discover these idols we thought would bring us so much happiness end up costing us more than we ever bargained for...why? Because we tend to make idols out of “things.”

- Things we love to do
- Things we love to look at
- Things we love to enjoy
- Things we spend our time and money on

These “things” become a SUBSTITUTE SAVIOR and we begin to trust in them more than we trust in God. We trust in our ability. We trust in our money. We trust in government. We trust in education. We trust in all kinds of “things” that are not necessarily evil but by putting them in place of God we make them into idols.

When this happens we have a worship problem which will lead us too a sin problem.

Let's Discern the Idols In Our Life.

Let me ask you a question. "Are you worshipping idols?" I know what most of us would say, "No! Pastor, I don't have little statues in my house." Well, again I want to emphasize an idol is ANYTHING you trust in more than God. So, let me ask again, "Are you worshipping idols?"

Ask yourself these questions:

- What is the most valuable thing in my life?
- What do I spend most of my time thinking about?
- What is my purpose for living?

What are the things you cling too?

- Friends
- Education
- Pleasure
- A Sports Hero
- SELF (Which is the most common idol in the world).

Please don't get me wrong. We need education, career, jobs, pleasure but these cannot take the place of God. We cannot put our trust in these things because these "THINGS" will pass away but he who does the will of God will live forever!

- Money will go away

- Friends will forsake us
- Education will not provide all answers
- Sports heroes will fade off the scene
- BUT HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD WILL LIVE FOREVER!

Remember what Jonah said when he was sitting in the belly of a great fish,
“Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.”

(Johan 2:8)

Let's Destroy The Idols In Our Lives.

OK we have asked ourselves some tough questions. We have examined our hearts and asked God to reveal those things we have put in His place – NOW WHAT? What do I do when I have discerned idols in my life?

Well you have already taken the most important step by identifying the idols you are worshipping, but just putting a name to the idol doesn't mean it has been destroyed in our lives.

1. Abandon the Idol. Turn you back on the thing(s) that have come between you and God (repent).
 - Hating our brother, not obeying the commandments, living unholy, etc.
2. Give Way to the Real God – Jesus! Take the thing that you put in God's place and give it too Jesus. How? Through prayer we ask the Lord to help us yield our lives to holiness and righteousness not idolatry. Let God become the owner of your life and let Him back in His rightful position as LORD of all you do and say.

3. Set Up A Security Force Around Your Heart. Let me read you a beautiful passage from Proverbs 4:23-27 (from *The Message*)

Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts. Don't talk out of both sides of your mouth; avoid careless banter, white lies and gossip. Keep your eyes straight ahead; ignore all the sideshow distractions. Watch your step, and the road will stretch out smooth before you. Look neither right nor left; leave evil in the dust.

We set up a security force around our heart by keeping our eyes on Jesus! We ignore all the distractions the Devil would like to put in our way.

Revelation 2:2-5a