

# The Worship of False Gods

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the dangers of worshipping false gods and the transformative power of worshipping the true God.*

**Duration:** 40:07

**Scripture:** Psalm 115:1, Psalm 115:4

**Topics:** "Idol Worship", "True Worship"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the concept of worship and the nature of false gods that people create, such as the pursuit of recognition, pleasure, money, and sex. It emphasizes the importance of worshipping the true and living God, as individuals become like the gods they worship. The psalmist highlights the folly of idol worship and the significance of having God as the central focus in life, above all other pursuits.

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## Transcript

Psalm 115. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake. It's an interesting thing about human nature, and I guess it begins pretty early in life.

Maybe we sort of are guilty as parents of praising our children for every little development that we see when they start to say words, when they start to take steps, and we are praising them so highly and telling them how wonderful they are. Maybe that's where it starts, I don't know, but it seems like as we grow up we enjoy recognition. We enjoy the applause.

We enjoy, you know, glory, you might say. But here the psalmist is saying, Lord not unto us, not unto us, but unto your name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen now say, where is your God now? We used to sing a chorus, and this is, you know, way back before when.

Yeah, they're back in high school days. I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Yeah, that's the one.

And they started adding a lot of verses to that. And one of the verses that was added to it is, I have the happy hope that heckles heathens down in my heart. But you know, it's an interesting thing how heathen seem to be heckled by the happy hope that we have.

They somehow resent your relationship with the Lord, the joy that you have, the ability to be sustained by Him in dark times. That you're still smiling. You still have that hope.

And that seems to heckle them. So that whenever something goes seriously wrong, they like to come around and say, hmm, where is your God now? In these circumstances, in the reversals that you're in, where is your God now? And they use it as a taunt against the fact that we have put our trust in the Lord, and we're just looking to Him, and our hope is in Him. The psalmist goes on to say, our God is in the heavens, and He has done whatever He pleased.

Now, there are times when I'm sure that we ourselves wonder, where is our God in this circumstance? Jacob, you remember when he received word that that cruel leader down in Egypt is not going to give us any more grain, unless the youngest son, Benjamin, goes with his brothers down to Egypt. As finally, through desperation, he had to send them off with Benjamin, with the promise of the older brothers that they would take care of Benjamin, and see that no harm would come to him. And as they left, Jacob cried out, all things are against me.

That's a generalization, and we have to be careful about generalizations. All things are against me. No, Jacob, that's not true.

All things are not against you. Your son Joseph, who so many years ago, you thought was killed by a wild beast, because of the guises of your other sons who were jealous of him. Your son Joseph is alive.

In fact, he is that man in Egypt that is ordered that his younger brother come down in order to buy grain, because he is a full brother to Benjamin, and has not seen him for so many years. Jacob, you don't know the whole story. And that's one of our problems.

We oftentimes make judgments without really knowing the whole story. And if Jacob only knew the whole story, he wouldn't be saying, all things are against me. And so often with our own lives, we only know part of the story, and we seem to jump to conclusions, because the part that we know doesn't look so good.

And we are prone with Jacob to say, all things are against me. God said to Jeremiah, I know the thoughts that I think toward you. They are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a desirable end.

I know what I'm doing. And all things are going to work together for good, as long as you love the Lord, and are called according to his purposes. The psalmist answers these hecklers, who are saying, where is your God now? He says, my God's in the heavens, and he has done what he is pleased.

One of our problems is that question, why? I had a professor who said, I will never allow myself to fall in the cesspool of why. So oftentimes, as things take place in our lives, and adverse circumstances, we have that why. Why me? Why does this happen? Why did this have to happen? Why? And we are oftentimes really just sort of brought to almost a point of distraction by this question, why? God said, my ways are not your ways, saith the Lord.

My ways are beyond your finding out. So that question, why, can be very frustrating, because oftentimes, the Lord doesn't reveal to us why. In fact, so often, when we are saying why, the Lord just says, well, trust me, I don't like that Lord.

I want to know why. But he doesn't always satisfy our curiosity. He doesn't always explain to us.

But so often, as time goes on, and as we see the full story, we understand the why. And we see what God was doing. And those things that we thought were, like Jacob, against me, are really not against me.

God is working behind the scenes. And if I only knew it, I'd be rejoicing in the situation, rather than fretting over the situation. Because God is working out his perfect purpose and plan in my life, through these issues that are taking place, that I really don't personally understand why.

David wrote in Psalm 37, commit your ways unto the Lord. Trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass. Now, you remember that 37th Psalm begins with, fret not thyself.

And of course, the cure for fretting is to understand that the Lord is working and just committed to him, and he will bring it to pass, his perfect plan, his will. Now, the psalmist goes on to say, where they say, where is now your God? And he says, our God's in the heavens. But he said, their idols, or their gods, are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

People often say that they are atheists. There are no atheists. Everybody has a God, not everybody has the true God.

But everybody has a master passion that governs their life. There are many false gods. And so, the psalmist speaks up about their gods, or their idols, their gods.

Everybody has a God. They've made their own gods out of silver or gold, but they are the work of men's hands, making their own gods. And this is true of most of the world today.

They are worshiping and serving man-made gods. In man making a God, he makes his God like himself. The idea is, if I were God, how would I govern? The musicians back there are getting restless.

If I were God, I would live on Mount Olympus, and I wouldn't use my superior powers in taking advantage of mortal man. And so, you have your Greek mythology, their gods up on Mount Olympus, and intertwining in the affairs of man, taking advantage of their greater powers over mortals. Down in the jungles of South America, Bolivian jungles, those natives down there worship trees, they worship the moon, they worship the sun.

The idea being, if I were God, I would dwell in that tree over there. It is strong, it is impervious to the winds, and to the rain, and all. And so, they worship the trees, believing that the God dwells within the trees.

Or if I were God, I would ride through the night sky, so they worship the moon. And the idea is, what I would be, or what I would do. Now, you know, there are a lot of people, not in the jungles of Bolivia, who make their own gods, or who want to make their own gods.

So often, people come to me with the question, why did God, or why would God? And whenever a person begins a question with, why would God, or why did God, I can just all automatically answer, I don't know. Usually, though, you try to give some kind of an answer, but we don't know the whys of God. But basically, when a person asks the question, why would God, or why did God? Basically, underlying the question is, if I were God, I wouldn't have done it that way.

I would have done it this way. And basically, you are saying that you have superior ways than God, better ways than God. I wouldn't do it God's way.

And that's where you get the idea of creating your own God. This is what I would do. This is how I would do it if I were God.

And so, it's a challenge of God. You're challenging him of why he would do things, and why he does things the way he does. Making their own gods.

As man makes a God, he makes a God like himself in his own image. He said, they have mouths, but they speak not. Eyes, they have, but they see not.

They have ears, but they hear not. They have noses, but they can't smell. They have hands, but they cannot handle.

They have feet, but they can't walk. And neither do they speak through their throat. So, he's looking at these gods that the heathen had made.

Carving them out of stone, or molding them out of silver or gold. These little likenesses of the gods that they are worshiping and serving. And he observes that the faces of the little gods have eyes, noses, ears, mouth, feet, hands.

He's made his God like himself. Why would I carve eyes in my little God? Because I have eyes. Why would I carve ears? Because I have ears.

Why would I leave him bald? You make your God like yourself. But, he makes an observation, and an important observation. Though they make their gods like themselves, they actually make their gods less than themselves.

Because though I may put eyes on my little God that I've carved out of stone, those eyes can't see. Though I carve ears on the little God, those ears can't hear. Though I carve a mouth, it can't speak.

Though I carve feet, it can't walk. So, though I've made my God like myself, I've actually made my God less than myself. And so it is with man-made gods.

Now, in the day that the psalmist was writing this, there were major gods that the people worshipped. There was Baal. Basically, the worship of Baal was the worship of man's intellect.

That man that says, I will not believe anything that I cannot bring within the confines of my own understanding. I'm an agnostic. There may be gods, but I, you know, you can't know him, and I will not have any God that I cannot truly understand.

Sort of worship of Baal, the intellect. And these are the professional students. They are always taking more and more courses.

The mind, the education is the thing with them. When it comes to ultimate knowledge, that is the knowledge of God. And you ask these individuals worshipping Baal, worshipping their intellect, well, what about ultimate knowledge, the knowledge of the creator? They will usually respond, I'm an agnostic.

But what is agnosticism? Agnosticism. The word to know in Greek is gnosko. To put the negative prefix in front of it, a, and in Greek, a is the negative prefix.

To put the negative prefix in front of gnosko to know, you have do not know or cannot know. So, it is really a confession of ignorance. It is sort of amusing to me that that man who makes his intellect his God, when it comes to ultimate knowledge, he confesses he's ignorant.

Which he is. There was Molech. Molech was the God of pleasure.

And he is probably one of the most popular gods in the United States today. I look on the television on Saturday, the football games, and I see these huge stadiums packed with people across the country. And the pleasure God.

People that are looking for pleasure, and of course, the Bible does tell us that one of the signs of the last days that men would be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. And so, Molech, the God of pleasure. But there's an interesting thing about making Molech your God or making pleasure your God.

And that is that it always takes just a little bit more or a new twist in order to get the same degree of pleasure that you had the first time. You're always going for more. There's no place where you really can sit down and say, I'm satisfied.

That's great. It's always looking to the next game. It's always looking to the next season.

It's always looking to some new twist. Look at how many things are being developed in our world today to bring the sensation of pleasure to people. And look at the things that people do for excitement and pleasure.

Jumping off of high bridges with bungee cords and all, to get that rush, to get that thrill of just falling with this cord tied to your foot and all. And so, you're looking for higher bridges. And, you know, just where does it stop? Then there is the God Mammon that was worshiped.

The little idols representing Mammon. Mammon was the worship of the material things, money. You've often heard it said money.

But in reality, money is only a means of acquiring, of controlling. As they say, the golden rule is he who has the gold rules. And money represents power.

You don't want money just so you can fill your bathtub with silver dollars and just get in it and sort of just throw them over you and all. I've got all this money. No, you don't want money for that.

You want money because the power it gives you to possess things that you want, the material things that you want. And again, it's an interesting thing. I want power.

I want control. And so, people are obsessed by this and they start saving their money. But as I have observed with so many that I know who have gained a great deal of wealth, they soon become a slave.

Rather than having power, they become a slave to their money and they get to the place where they have a hard time spending it. Hattie Green was one of the wealthiest women while she was alive. She was the wealthiest woman in the world.

Hattie Green had amassed a tremendous fortune. She lived in this large home in New York, but she had the whole house boarded up except for a couple of rooms in order to save on energy, the energy bill. Finally, she moved out of the house because she found a \$12 a week or \$12 a month room in boarding house.

So, she moved out of her mansion and was living in this boarding house for \$12 a week. At that time, the New York Times paper cost a nickel and she would go out and buy the New York Times and she would go

through the financial page and the market and so forth. And then she would fold it up carefully, send her son out to resell it so she could get her nickel back.

One day when her son was out in the park trying to sell the paper, he slipped on ice, cut his leg. She took him to the free hospital where the doctor recognized her and refused to treat her son free. So angry, she took her son out of the hospital, took him home.

Gangrene set into the and wound and they had to ultimately amputate his leg. When she died, she left her inheritance to her son who was so embittered by her punery that he went out and blew the whole estate. But money, her God, power, she became a slave.

Then of course, there was the god, goddess Ashtoreth, the goddess of sex. And again, you know, we think that we've advanced so far, don't we? But yet the same basic gods that the people worshipped at the time of David are the same gods that people are worshipping today. Things that control a person's life, things that get such a hold upon a person that this is what they're living for, this is the basic purpose of life, the very same things.

And there are so many people today wound up in sex. But again, these gods do not satisfy. A person who gets caught up worshipping sex, soon just normal sex doesn't satisfy.

They have to start getting perverted. Just pornography doesn't satisfy. It has to become more explicit.

And it's one of those things that they go on and on and on, deeper and deeper, trying to find the same kind of excitement that they, but you see, you become so easily accustomed to these things that you have to keep adding to it in order to get the same kind of charge or thrill from it. So, the psalmist observed, they were making their gods. They were making their gods like themselves, but they were ultimately making their gods less than themselves.

Because their gods were insensate. Then the psalmist makes this observation in verse 8. They that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trust in them. This a truism.

You are becoming like your God. If your God is a false God, you are becoming false. You are becoming like your God.

The Bible tells us, beloved, now are we the sons of God. It doesn't yet appear what we're going to be, but we know that when he appears, we're going to be like him. Why? Because a man becomes like his God.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, we with open faces, as we behold the glory of the Lord, we're being changed from glory to glory into the same image by his spirit that is working in us, because a man becomes like his God. Stand on the street corner in Los Angeles. Watch the people go by, and you can pretty much tell who their God is.

It's revealed. They become like their God. If your God is blind, you're becoming blind to the truth of God.

If your God is deaf, you're becoming deaf to the voice of God. If your God is insensate, without senses, you are becoming hard, cold, without feeling. The flip side, of course, if your God is pure, you're becoming pure.

If your God is true, you're becoming true. If your God is holy, you're becoming holy. There are people saying, well, it really doesn't matter who I worship or what I worship, you know.

Oh, yes, it does. It matters greatly, because you're either created by God and recognize that, or you're trying to create your own God. Like the fellow said, I'm a self-made man, and his friend said, and you look like it too.

You become like your God. You know, our desire is to become like our God. He is a loving God, to become loving.

He's a true God, to become true. My desire is to be like God, and if we worship and serve Him, if He is truly our God, we are becoming like Him, because you can't help it. You are becoming like your God.

That's why it is so important that you have the true and the living God that you worship. Vitally important, because you're becoming like your God. Father, help us to assimilate these truths.

Help us, Lord, to realize that the God that we worship is of utmost importance, because it is just the law of nature that a man becomes like his God. Lord, we thank you for this truth, because you are our God, and we want to become like you. So Father, tonight, help us to take an honest inventory of our lives.

What are we worshipping? What is the primary motivating force within our life? What is it that we get up for in the morning? What is it that we are seeking as we go about the day? Lord, as we live in a world that has so many false gods, and we see people worshipping these principles, though they don't have the idols, though they haven't made the images, though they haven't carved out of the stone, yet within their hearts, these are the master passions that control their lives. Lord, cast down every idol, break down every foe. Wash us, Lord, that we might become whiter than snow.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you tonight, and to pray for you. And looking at your life, and if you have come up with, not sure, or maybe a divided heart, like the psalmist prayed, Lord, unite my heart to worship Thee.

Don't want to have a divided heart. Don't want to divide my devotions between the other gods and you. I want you, Lord, to be first in my life.

Now, that doesn't mean that you can't have pleasure. God created us to enjoy pleasure, but if pleasure becomes the paramount thing in your life, then it's wrong. These things are all in their place, in the order God said, you shall have no other gods before me.

So, in setting the priorities, make sure that he's first, he's top, and the others will fall into place, and they won't control your life. He will be the one in control of your life. And if, in looking at your life, it isn't that way, these men are down here to pray for you tonight, to help get rid of the idols in your life, that God might reign supreme.

So, as soon as we're dismissed, we would encourage you, come on down, seek the Lord, and just turn your life over fully, that he is God in your life. To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all I ask to be like him, all through life's journey from earth to glory, all I ask to be like him, to be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all I ask to be like him, all through life's journey from earth to glory, all I ask to be like him. God make it so.

God bless you.

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