

Flee Idolatry

by Timothy Williams

The sermon emphasizes the seriousness of idolatry and the necessity of worshiping God in obedience and truth.

Duration: 28:33

Scripture: Exodus 32:1-4, 1 Samuel 15:22-23, John 4:23, 1 Corinthians 10:14, 1 Peter 1:18-19

Topics: "True Worship", "Idolatry"

Description

Timothy Williams emphasizes the critical need to flee from idolatry, explaining that idolatry is not just about loving worldly things more than God, but also includes worshiping God in ways that do not align with His commands. He highlights that true worship must stem from a heart of obedience and submission to God's will, warning that disobedience and excuses in our worship can lead to spiritual separation from God. Williams uses biblical examples, such as King Saul's disobedience and the Israelites' creation of the golden calf, to illustrate how idolatry manifests in our lives. He calls the congregation to examine their hearts and flee to the cross for cleansing from idolatry, reminding them that God is worthy of their obedience and devotion.

Transcript

This morning I want to talk to you about flea idolatry. Flea idolatry. Go with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

We're going to look at one verse, verse 14. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. Flee from idolatry.

Let's pray. Lord, we love you this morning. And God, we just now incline our hearts to the word of the Lord.

Father, we just ask that you would speak to our hearts. You would work in our hearts. By the power of your word, you would sanctify our hearts.

Father, I do pray that you would just give us ears to hear your word this morning. God, and we give you glory and honor for everything that you're doing in our life. And we pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Flea idolatry. Well, right offhand, I know what some of you are thinking.

You're thinking, Pastor Tim's preaching on idolatry this morning. So he's going to tell me that anything I love more than I love Jesus is an idol in my life. He's preaching on idolatry this morning.

He's going to tell me that the love of worldly things and worldly possessions as they have my heart and have the affections of my heart more than Jesus, they're idols in my life. He's going to tell me that if I love money and have such a love for money that is so deep-rooted in my heart, that's covetousness. And covetousness is the sin of idolatry.

This is what he's going to tell me. And you know what? That is part of idolatry. I'm not going to take that away.

That is a part of idolatry, loving things more than loving Jesus. But there's something else that the Lord put upon my heart that's just as much a form of idolatry than these things. And that's what I feel like the Lord wants me to share with you this morning.

He wants to go into our hearts, search our hearts, challenge our hearts, and speak to our hearts this morning. Before I define idolatry, before I define what the Lord wants to say this morning, let's just look again at verse 14, what Paul says. Paul says, Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

So what Paul is saying is idolatry is very serious. It's very, very serious. Idolatry will shipwreck your faith.

Idolatry will bring a disillusionment over your life, bring a darkness over your heart. Ultimately, idolatry will separate you from the presence of the Lord. It will lead you further and further away from the heart of God.

So idolatry is something that we need to take serious. Paul says it's something that we need to flee from. And when we flee from it, there's one place we need to go, and that's to the cross.

And we'll look at that at the end of the message. But let's define idolatry. Jesus said, don't turn there, but Jesus said in John 4 verse 23, he says the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

So Jesus said that we are to worship God in truth. So true worship is simply this, it's worshiping the Lord, but it's worshiping God God's way. That's what worship is.

The true worshiper will worship God in spirit and in truth. So idolatry is simply this, worshiping God, but not worshiping him his way. It's worshiping the Lord, but not worshiping him in his order, how he has given us to worship him.

See, if our worship is going to be a sweet fragrance to the Lord, if our worship is going to minister to the Lord's heart, then it has to be a worship that proceeds out of a heart that loves the Lord. And that love evidenced by obedience and submission to the Lord. That's worship.

See, worship is more than coming in and singing songs and lifting our hands and whispering sweet little love words to Jesus. It's a lot more than that. Our heart, our life has to be evidenced by obedience, has to be evidenced by submission to the Lord and fully given our heart wholly to the Lord and walking in obedience and submission to the Lord.

It's that obedient life, it's that love evidenced by an obedient life that makes our worship a sweet fragrance to the Lord. It's that love and obedience to the Lord that makes our worship when we lift our hands and when we lift our voices and when we whisper those words, those intimate words, Jesus, I love you. It's that obedient life, obedience, evidencing our intimacy with God that truly makes worship, worship to the Lord.

A disobedient life will not touch God's heart. Disobedient life, it doesn't matter how many words we whisper to the Lord, Lord, I love you and I give you glory, that does not touch God's heart. It's a love that's

evidenced by an obedient life that makes worship, worship.

So again, understand idolatry is worshiping the true God, but not worshiping the true God, God's way. That's idolatry. So what I want to do this morning, I just want to go into scriptures and I just want to look at a couple of instances where we see people worshiping the true God, but they're not worshiping the Lord in God's way.

And I want to look at that and there were some things that I want to bring out about idolatry. First of all, I want to go to 1 Samuel chapter 15, a familiar story. Looking at King Saul, we're going to look at verse 22, 23.

And Samuel said unto Saul, hath the Lord his great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected you from being king.

So we know this story, it's a familiar passage of scripture. The Lord gives King Saul a clear word, it was a clear word from the Lord. It wasn't something that he had to guess, it wasn't something that had a gray area, he received a clear word from the Lord.

And Saul chose to disobey the word of the Lord. And the truth that I have this morning is going to be a very simple truth, but it's something that God really stuck in my heart. And it's not going to surprise you when you hear it, but this is the truth.

Idolatry is worshiping with clear disobedience in our lives. Idolatry is worshiping the Lord, but lightly esteeming the commandments of God and really not taking God serious. That's idolatry in the eyes of the Lord.

Now right here some of you would say, well that really don't surprise me. I can see how you would say that. I can see how you come up with that.

So I don't want to stay here long because there's something else in this story I want to look at. But I do want to say this, sometimes something will come to our heart and we're not sure if it's the Lord or not. Sometimes we think God is speaking to us and we're not sure if it's coming out of our own heart or if it's truly the spirit of the Lord.

And so when those kind of occasions occur, a lot of times what we do is we just wait upon the Lord and that's the right thing to do. We pray and say, Lord I'm not sure if this is really your spirit or not speaking to me to do this, speaking to my heart and giving me this instruction. I'm not sure if it's you or not.

So Lord, I'm asking you to make it clear. I'm asking you to confirm it. I'm asking you to make it plain.

That's all right. That's what we need to do. We need to pray.

We need to ask the Lord to confirm it and see if it's him. But this isn't the case with Saul. Saul received a clear word from the Lord and Saul disobeyed a clear word from the Lord.

Now brothers and sisters, where do we get a clear word from God? Where is the clear word? Where is that God gives us clear commandments and we don't have to guess what the Lord is saying? It's right here in our Bibles. It's right here in his word. We know exactly what God means when he says that we

need to forgive.

We know exactly what God means when he says we need to love our enemies. We know exactly what God means when he says that we need to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord, which is a reasonable service. We know exactly what the Lord is saying.

And idolatry is simply this, when I don't take the commandments of the word of God serious, when I pick and choose what I want to obey, when I pick and choose what I want to discard and forfeit, when I want to accept in my heart and accept in my life what's right for me and discard the things that I don't like, when I lightly esteem the commandments of the Lord, the Lord says that's idolatry. That's idolatry in your life, in your heart. That is idolatry.

But see, again, we would say, but I understand that. I can see how you get that. So I'm not going to dwell there.

We can understand that. But here's what I feel very strongly from the Lord to bring out. I want you to look at 1 Samuel 15 verses 13 through 15.

Verse 13 says, And Samuel came to Saul and said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord. I have performed the commandments of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites.

And for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord, and the rest we have utterly destroyed. So what I simply want to say here is this. When Samuel speaks to Saul about his disobedience, Saul makes an excuse for disobedience.

Saul finds a way to excuse his disobedience. And this is what the Lord has really put upon my heart. And it's simply this.

Idolatry is worshiping the Lord with excuses in our lives. Instead of confessing our disobedience and repenting of it, when we justify our disobedience and we make our disobedience right in our own eyes by our excuses, that is idolatry. See, brothers and sisters, there's many people in the church that have made excuses a habit.

They've made excuses a habit. It's so easy. We constantly justify our disobedience with excuses.

We have gotten so used to twisting things and making them right in our own eyes, and it has become a habit. It's become a habit. Now, let me just give you where I'm coming from with this.

Sometimes as a leader, sometimes being in leadership, being a pastor, sometimes you have to bring correction to folks. It's just a part of the job. You have to bring correction to folks.

The Lord would say, Tim, there's something going on right here that you need to correct. You need to just bring some light upon it. And as leadership and as pastors, we have to do that.

But you always have those individuals. It doesn't matter how many times you correct them. They're always justified in their own eyes.

They always have an excuse for what they do. It doesn't matter how many times that you correct them. They're never wrong because they have an excuse.

They're never broken over their disobedience. They never acknowledge that they're in the wrong and they need to repent over it. They always have an excuse.

And the Lord says, when you worship me with excuses in your heart, excusing your disobedience, that's idolatry. Why are excuses so tragic? Why are excuses so tragic? Because it truly forfeits how God wants to use our life. See, when it comes to using our lives for his glory and his kingdom, what God looks for is faithfulness.

That's what he looks for. He doesn't determine how he's going to use your life by your giftings, by your talents, by your abilities. He looks for one thing.

Are you faithful? Are you obedient? Yes, I am faithful. I am obedient. Then I can use your gifts and your talents.

Now, there's something that I see that's true. But at the same time, as believers, we need to be careful with it. There's something that I see that is true.

But as believers, we need to be careful with it. It's when we say, God is faithful to me even when I'm not faithful. That is true.

God is faithful to us even when we're not faithful. But here's what we have to be careful with. If we're simply using this, God is faithful to me even when I'm not faithful.

If we're simply using this to comfort ourselves because we have disobedience in our lives, then all it is is an excuse. When we say God is faithful even when I'm not faithful, when we say that to comfort ourselves because we know we have disobedience in our lives, it becomes an excuse. It becomes an excuse.

God does expect us to be obedient and he does expect his people to be faithful. Amen. Now, regarding disobedience, there's something that I've said before in a sermon recently called When Disobedience Desires to Worship.

But I think it's really worth mentioning again. Looking at Saul's disobedience, we see that Saul made a clear choice to disobey. And looking at this story, we see that Saul made the grave mistake in thinking that partial obedience is obedience.

Listen, because Saul obeyed most of everything the Lord told him to do, he thought his obedience was acceptable to the Lord. I want to say that again. Please hear that.

Because Saul thought that he obeyed most of everything God told him to do, he thought his obedience was acceptable to the Lord. But brothers, sisters, we have to understand when we get a clear word from the Lord and we choose to disobey it, partial disobedience is disobedience in the eyes of the Lord. When God speaks to our heart about something in his word, it is disobedience in the eyes of the Lord.

Let's ask a question. Where does partial obedience come from? Partial obedience comes from an attitude of heart that says because I obey most of the time, it excuses the times when I do not want to obey. Because I obey most of the time, it excuses my little areas of disobedience.

That's where partial disobedience comes from. Comes from this attitude of heart that says because I obey most of the time, it excuses my little areas of disobedience. But God says when you have a clear word from the Lord, partial obedience is disobedience.

Amen. I want you to look with me. I just want to take a little sidestep here, talking about a worshiping heart.

I want you to look at verse 12. First Samuel 15 verse 12. Let's start with verse 10.

Samuel is in a place of prayer and the word of the Lord comes to Samuel in verse 10. It says, Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night.

And when Samuel rose to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and has gone about and has passed on and gone down to Gilgal. So I don't want you to see it in verse 12. It was told Samuel that King Saul has left this place and he has gone to Carmel and he's going down to Gilgal.

So what's happening here is after defeating the Amalekites, Saul goes on a victory march. And he goes on this victory march because he wants to display everything that he has taken in war. He's taken spoils of war.

And in verse 12, if you look at it, it says this. It says, Talking to Samuel, they said, He came to Carmel and he set him up a place. Now that word place in the Hebrew means monument.

He set him up a monument. So in other words, King Saul set up a monument to himself celebrating his victory. But this is what Saul does.

He tries to cover up his selfish motive by claiming all that he has done is for the glory of God. It's really for his own glory, parading the people from Carmel to Gilgal, parading the best of the sheep and the oxen and the king of Agag before all the people. It's really for his own honor and his own glory coming out of a fearful spirit.

And so he's doing this. But what he says to Saul is he's saying, Saul, this selfish motive of mine is really done for the glory of God. He's trying to cover it up with the glory of God.

See, in verse 15, he says, We spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice the Lord. So he's trying to convince Samuel that everything he's doing, his motive is for the glory of the Lord, but it's not for the glory of the Lord. It's for his own personal glory.

Now, at this time, we can see this, but I have to be honest with you. This has a very special place in my heart at this time. Wednesday night, I was praying to the Lord.

I was praying a prayer to the Lord and I was praying something that was the will of God. And I was praying something that was clearly in the word of God. And I was praying something that would bring glory and honor to the Lord.

So I was praying this prayer out of my heart. And after I got still before the Lord and really got quiet before the Lord and just waiting for the Lord to speak to my heart, the Lord did speak to my heart. And in a very loving voice, a very tender voice, he said, Tim, why do you want me to answer that prayer? Why do you

want me to answer that prayer? And the Lord showed me the reason why I wanted him to answer that prayer is because it would make me look good.

The motive of my heart was the reason why I wanted the Lord to answer that prayer is because it would bring me honor in the eyes of men. And the Lord very lovingly challenged me on that and began to speak to my heart. It's not about your glory and honor.

It's about my glory and honor. Beloved, a worshiping heart is a heart that desires truth in the inward parts. It's a heart that speaks sincerely to the Lord.

Dear Jesus, don't let me get away with thinking that I'm doing something for your glory when deep down it's really all about me. Lord, when I try to mask and conceal my own selfish motives, shed light on it and lovingly convict my heart and work your truth in my heart. Brothers and sisters, that's a worshiping heart.

That is a heart God delights in, a heart that has that cry in the heart. That heart, it will know the pleasure and it will know the joy of the Lord because that is a heart the Lord delights in. Condemnation doesn't come to that heart.

The sweetness of God's presence and voice comes to that heart as he exposes these motives in our life because he knows, God, if there's anything hidden, Lord, reveal it because I just want to glorify the Lord. That's a worshiping heart, a heart that desires truth in the inward parts. So this morning the Lord wants us to understand when we come before his presence and worship him with excuses in our heart, excusing our disobediences.

In his eyes, it's idolatry. Let's look at another story, another familiar story. Go with me to Exodus chapter 32, starting with verse 1. And when the people saw that most delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together in the Aaron and said unto him, make us gods which go before us.

For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we will not what has become of him. And Aaron said unto them, break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears and brought them unto Aaron.

And he received them at their hand and fashioned it with a graven tool after he had made it a molten cap. And they said, these be like gods of Israel which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw, he built an altar before and Aaron made proclamation and said, tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.

So if you ever heard me preach on this passage of scripture, you probably know what I'm going to say at the beginning. But there's something I want to go deeper with this. But this is what I want us to see.

Moses delays to come off the mountain, the people are idle. They're in a place of idleness. They're getting tired of waiting upon Moses.

And they say to Aaron, Aaron up, make us gods that shall go before us. So Aaron said, break off your earrings and your gold. And he made this calf.

And they said, these be our gods that brought us out of Egypt. And then Aaron looking at this calf said, tomorrow we're going to make a feast to the Lord. Tomorrow we're going to burn the burnt offerings and we're going to burn the sacrifices and we're going to make a feast to the Lord.

And when he said, tomorrow we're going to make a feast to the Lord, that word Lord in the Hebrew is Jehovah. So he's not, he's looking at this Egyptian idol, but he's not talking about an Egyptian God. He's talking about Jehovah God.

So he's equating this Egyptian idol with God. And the reason why he'd done that just real quick is because all he knew was Egypt. All he had in his heart was Egypt.

And when all you know is the world and you don't have a desire to spend time in God's presence and let him transform you, then there's no other option but to take God and conform him to what is in your own heart, which is the world. That's why today we have a worldly Jesus, looks like the world, sounds like the world, acts like the world, thinks like the world, because we have conformed him, men have conformed him into what is in their own hearts. But this is what I want to talk about when it comes to idolatry.

See, they fashioned this golden calf. And this golden calf was a calf that they could carry around themselves. See, in order to carry this calf, what they would do is they would put it on their shoulders and they would carry this calf where they wanted it to go.

In other words, they could point this calf in the direction of what was in their hearts and say, this is where we want to go. Take us there. Now, brothers and sisters, as disciples, as followers of Christ, we are called to forsake all.

We're called to forsake our own path. We're called to forsake our own will and begin to ask the Lord, God, show us your will for my life. As disciples, we are called to take up our cross and deny ourselves and to seek God's plan for our lives.

That's what we're called to do. So right here with that understanding, I want to make a very bold statement, but I want to make it in the authority of the Lord. I truly believe this is the Lord has put this on my heart.

And that's simply this. If we are not a true disciple of the Lord, then there is a root, a measure, a depth of idolatry in our heart. If we're, if we truly haven't given our life to the Lord holy and saying, God, not my will be done, not my agendas, not my plans, but Lord, I'm truly seeking after your heart.

If we haven't grasped that in our hearts, then there is idolatry in our heart. And that idol is self. It's the idol of self.

See, because we are walking according to our own path and we are plotting our own course, then we are being the Lord over our own life. And in essence, what we are expecting the Lord to do is lead us according to what is in our own hearts. The Lord says that's idolatry.

You see, when we are walking our own path, in essence, we are doing the same thing that children of Israel did. We are trying to point Christ in our choice of direction and ask him to go before us. We are saying to the Lord, God, this is my direction.

This is my agenda. So go before me and open the doors that I need open in order to fulfill my agendas. And the Lord says this is idolatry in the idol itself.

Are we truly, truly seeking the Lord's will for our life or we still walk in our own path and agendas and asking the Lord, Lord, go before me and bless me and open the doors that I need open. The Lord says

that's idolatry. 1 Peter 1 verse 18 and 19 says, For as much as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without spot and blemish, says we were redeemed by the blood of the Lord, by the blood of Jesus.

Now listen to me. This is my point. The Lord commands us to obey him.

But what I want us to see is he is worthy of us to obey him. He is worthy of every sacrifice he tells us to put on the altar. He is worthy of us yielding up our wills and seeking his will.

He is worthy of that. See, it's a, it's just got into my heart. It's a passion of my heart that I'm trying to teach my son that the Lord tells us that we need to obey him, but he's worthy of our obedience.

He is worthy of us saying, Lord, if you want this on the altar, I'll put it on the altar. He's worthy of us saying, God, not my will, but your will. Why is he worthy? Because brothers and sisters, we were lost in our transgressions and our trespasses and our sins.

And God sent his son, Jesus, to bear our wrath upon him and to cleanse us and wash us in his own blood and make us acceptable in his beloved, in the beloved as his sons and daughters. He is worthy. He's worthy of it.

And the Lord says, I'm not going to go before you and bless your agendas unless you take up your cross, deny yourself and follow me. You cannot be my disciple. And in the love of God, I want to say this, everything else is idolatry because what we're basically doing is we're pointing Jesus in our direction and saying, Lord, go before me and open the doors that I need.

Lord says, I'm not going to do that. It's my will. I'm just going to end there.

Stand with me this morning. Now here's the hope and here's the mercy of the Lord. Someone here today may be hearing this message this morning and saying, wow, I have this stuff in my heart.

Excuses. I have a lot of excuses. God has been giving me a clear word and I've made a lot of excuses.

I've made a lot of excuses to myself. I've made a lot of excuses to my leadership, places of correction. I've justified my disobedience when I've known it was disobedience.

All these kind of things. Well, here's the hope. Paul says to flee from idolatry.

And this morning we have a place that we can go and that's the cross. Brothers and sisters, if you see hints of these things in your life, if you see symptoms and evidences of these things in your life, the Lord says there's a place that you can go to find cleansing and that's the cross.

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