

First Corinthians (and Second)
An Expository Series
“Idolatry”

Let's open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and v.9. repeat. We are continuing our series from Paul's letters to the church in ancient Corinth and this morning we are continuing our examination of the people group Paul identified as the unrighteous. We will focus our attention on one particular group of the unrighteous called “idolators.” *1 Corinthians 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters.* We will stop there for this morning's sermon.

Let me review a couple of matters of context before we go any further. First, the unrighteous are those who are not in Christ. The righteous are those who are in Christ solely by the grace and mercy and love of God poured out upon their lives. It pays to keep in mind that God justifies the ungodly and all who are in Christ are the justified ungodly now deemed righteous. Our righteousness is the gift of God. It is called “imputed righteousness,” meaning that God has declared us righteous by exchanging Christ's righteousness for our sinfulness. Christ became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. You are righteous.

Second, Paul commanded the confused and deceived saints in Corinth to stop being deceived by the liberals of their day. Liberalism didn't begin in the 20th century, it began in the 1st. Some of the Corinthian believers had been deceived into believing that the unrighteous would inherit the kingdom of God, and that my friends is liberalism. You may recall the local churches I identified last week who are the deceived liberals in our fair city. Liberalism preaches a different gospel and a different Jesus from the Jesus in the word of God.

Now to our people group for this morning, idolaters.

Idols are any images, people, false gods, animals, phantoms, things or religious systems that usurp the rightful place of God as the object of our worship and desire.

Did anything come to mind as you read that definition of idols?

Have you ever seen an idol? I'm sure you have. Have you ever been inside a Roman Catholic church? *Pics here. The icons set up inside that church are idols, objects of worship that usurp the rightful place of God as the only object of a believer's worship. And that includes statues of Mary. And speaking of Mary, she is the object of worship that places her as co-redeemer with Christ. *Pic here.

If you should drive down Sugar Creek Road going toward Harris Boulevard you will pass a Buddhist Center with dozens of Buddhist idols in their yard. When I was in the Army and serving in Vietnam, I went on r & r to Bangkok, Thailand, and I was given a tour of a Buddhist temple that had a large, gold statue of Buddha at its center. *put pic here.

Have you ever seen any of the millions of gods of Hinduism? *put pics here.

And have you ever seen this object of worship? *Pic of hundred dollar bill.

"Idolatry is big business."

And always has been. Read this, ²³ *About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.*

²⁴ *For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen;*

²⁵ *these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.*

²⁶ *"You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.*

²⁷ *"Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence."*

²⁸ *When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:23-28 NAU)*

Honestly, idolatry isn't something we think about or talk about these days, is it? But it is all around us. Back in the '70' and '80's when televangelists were ruling the airways, very few pastors and theologians were calling these people idolaters, and they were. They were so popular that our pastors were afraid to call them out. A few did, but very few. False teachers like Jim Bakker and Oral Roberts and Kenneth Copeland and a local favorite, Leroy Jenkins, were making money hand-over-fist off the backs of their followers. And there were and still are millions and millions of followers of these charlatans.

The preachers of the health and wealth gospel are idolaters who are getting filthy rich off the backs of their deceived followers. They may not handcraft statues of false gods, but they take a man-made object and make it their god. Their god is the almighty dollar.

These preachers have broken at least four of the ten commandments, the 1st, the 2nd, the 8th and the 10th. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me; thou shalt not make an idol to worship it; thou shalt not steal; and thou shalt not covet your neighbor's possessions. And the possession they covet is their neighbor's money.

And furthermore and what I consider to be their most damnable lie is their teaching their followers to become idolaters just like them. They teach their followers to long to be rich. ⁹ *But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

¹⁰ *For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

¹¹ *But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (1 Tim. 6:9-11 NAU)*

Did you catch that in v.10? *For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith.* The love of money makes money an idol and those who are obsessed with the desire to be rich will probably wander away from the

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faith. That's what idols do. They turn people away from God to worship idols, and in our context that idol is money.

Turn in your Bibles or follow it on the screen, to Ephesians chapter 5 and we will begin reading at v.1. Eph. 5:1,

Ephesians 5:1 *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;
2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*

3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

*5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person **or covetous man, who is an idolater**, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; (Eph. 5:1-7 NAU)

And another witness, Colossians 3:5-6

*5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, **and greed, which amounts to idolatry.***

6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, (Col. 3:5-6 NAU)

It is really easy to make money a god. Think about what money can do and what money is. Money is like god. It's everywhere. It can get you pretty much anything you want. It can give you peace of mind and security and happiness. And wealth can make one feel like a god. Just ask Joel Osteen and Kenneth Copeland and Joyce Meyer and any of their cohorts. Do you realize that if you follow the teachings of these men and women, you don't need God? If money is the answer as they say it is, you don't need God. That's why the love of money and the obsession for it is idolatry.

¹¹ *But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (1 Tim. 6:9-11 NAU)*

An idol is anything that usurps the rightful place of God as our object of worship. The Bible says that idolaters will not inherit the kingdom of God. But that isn't the end of the story. Here is the rest of the story, and it is found immediately following our text.

¹¹ *Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:11 NAU)*

Whether you were a fornicator or an idolater or an adulterer or homosexual or whatever, those who have by the grace of God come to faith in Jesus are none of those any longer. *but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.* You are now a new creation in Christ Jesus. You are now a righteous, raised up child of God. You are an heir of the kingdom and a joint heir with Jesus.

³⁰ *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,*

³¹ *so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." (1 Cor. 1:30-31 NAU)*