

Worship
Tear Down Every Idol (Part 4)
February 18, 2007
Tom Pennington, Pastor
Countryside Bible Church

Those of you who are visiting with us, I should tell you that you'll find us in the middle of a study in between two book studies. It's normally our habit on Sunday morning to study through a book of the Bible. We just finished the letter of James, and Lord willing, within the next few weeks I'll begin, maybe a little more than that, I'll begin a study of Ephesians, and look forward to our study of that book. But in the middle here, we're looking at the issue of worship. We started by looking at the issue of idolatry, the wrong kind of worship. You see, you and I were made to worship, and if we don't worship the true God, then we will worship something else. So, we began by looking at the issue of idolatry and, Lord willing, when I return from Ukraine in Russia, we'll begin to look positively at the nature of true worship, and what that looks like in the life of a believer, both individually and corporately.

But this morning, we come to the end of our study of the issue of idolatry. I'm sure when I first announced the series, you may have been tempted to wonder why we would study idolatry. I mean, after all, that finds no place in twenty-first century America. Isn't that part of the ancient past and of the Middle East? I hope you see now that nothing could be further from the truth, that Calvin was in fact right, that the human heart, your heart and my heart, is in fact a factory of idols. You and I can turn almost anything into an idol. The reason most Christians don't understand that is the fact that they have redefined idolatry as only one thing: the worship of false gods localized in a piece of stone or wood.

But in fact, as we saw two Sundays ago, the biblical definition of idolatry is much broader than that. We looked at seven different forms of idolatry as they are laid out in the Scripture. We spent most of our time looking at the last of those seven forms and the ones that I think we are most tempted to follow. That seventh-form of idolatry that we looked at is this: giving any human desire, every one of those words is important, giving any human desire precedence over God's Word and God's will.

When you and I take any desire that's a part of our hearts, and it becomes more important to us than obeying God, than following His will, that has become in our life an idol. We looked at length at Colossians 3. Coming to the heart of that passage, which is verse 5, where Paul lists a

series of sins that you and I are to put off, and he says, “including covetousness, which *is* idolatry.” To covet is to commit idolatry. Covetousness is simply a strong desire either for what you don’t have, or craving more of something than you have, or that you ought to have. It is a craving of the heart. You can covet, or crave, people, for example, usually with the ultimate goal of being either sexual fulfillment or a meaningful relationship, but you can crave a person. You can crave material things. We call that materialism, or as Jesus said, it’s like worshipping mammon, worshipping wealth. You can also crave, or covet, and this is key, specific circumstances. You see, the potential circumstances in our lives that can become idolatrous are almost endless. Essentially, anything you want badly enough, whatever it is, can become an idol.

Perhaps, for example, you have a strong desire for personal comfort. I think that’s one of the most common idols in our country. Personal comfort, for ease, for security, for control. Many people have the idol of a Christian family. They want a Christian family so badly that they’re willing to disobey God to get it. Perhaps you’re disappointed with your Christian husband or your Christian wife. They don’t measure up, and so you’re willing to make having a Christian husband like you want, or a Christian wife like you want an idol, that causes you not to obey God even in that relationship that you’re supposed to. Perhaps you crave children, or health, or physical beauty, or a kind of lifestyle that you’ve seen and that excites you.

Perhaps possessions is what you crave. A home, or a different one in a different neighborhood, or financial prosperity, or a particular position, a status symbol, a particular career or job, recognition, and on and on the list goes. Anything you can desire can become an idol. And understand this, this is key: if in fact it has become an idol in your life, it is highly unlikely that you recognize it. Even as I read that list, you maybe sitting there saying, well, check, check, check, no I don’t have any of those. I mean, yeah, I have desires, but they are not idolatrous, because our hearts are deceitful. They lie to us about our idols. That’s why we have to pray with David, as he prays at the end of Psalm 139: search me, O God, and know my heart; ... And see if there’s some way in me, what? That causes You pain.

How can we recognize if our desires have become something more than legitimate desires and have in fact grown into full fledged idols in our hearts? Well, we answered that question in some detail last time, but let me summarize it for you like this. Ask yourselves these two questions:

Number one: what are you willing to sin, to get? What desire are you willing to sin, to satisfy? And secondly: what desire do you sin because you don’t get? Whatever your answers to those questions may be, you have identified the idol or idols in your own life. Because in the end,

anything that displaces God, anything that becomes more important to you than His Word and His will, has become idolatrous.

Now, this is a serious thing. In fact, the New Testament gives us a very serious warning that, although, genuine Christians can be tempted by idolatry, and in fact do give in to idolatry, we're all testimony to that> Listen carefully: those whose lives are characterized by one of these forms of idolatry, who live to satisfy their idolatrous desires, these people will not inherit the kingdom of God. There are a number of passages that make this point. Turn to 1 Corinthians 6. 1 Corinthians 6:9. Paul writes:

... do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived;" [Don't let your heart be deceived.] "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

Now look at that list. There are two kinds of idolaters there. The word "idolaters," the first word probably refers to idolaters more like we think of, normally, the other six forms, if you will, of idolatry. But then, he includes the word "covetous," which we learned last time in Colossians 3, is idolatry. Those whose lives are characterized by idolatry of any form, including covetousness, feeding their desires, will not inherit the kingdom of God.

This is a serious thing. Paul makes the same point in Ephesians 5:5, For this you know with certainty, [you don't have to guess about this; 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.

So, you understand how serious this is. As Christians, we must not allow ourselves to be swayed into idolatry. You see, in a very real sense, when God saved us, on that day when you came to faith in Christ, you renounced all other gods, and you committed yourself, in absolute loyalty, to the true God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

You remember, even in the new covenant, back in Ezekiel, the new covenant that we're part of, God says, "I will cleanse you from all your idols." That's part of the work of regeneration, when God makes a heart new, He cleanses us from our idolatry. Or to put it in the language of the New Testament, in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, you remember Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, they're in Thessalonica, and he said to them, when you came to faith in Jesus Christ, "... you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God." Because of that, you and I as Christians must not

permit our loyalty to be divided. There must be no syncretism. Our motto must never be, “God and ...”, but always “God *only*”.

But, you and I know, because we know our hearts, that we have allowed desires within our hearts, to become idolatrous, haven't we? If you're honest with yourself, there isn't a single person in this room this morning, who can honestly say they have not allowed their desires to become more important to them than obeying God. That means we're all idolaters. So how do we respond? We're not characterized by idolatry if we're in Christ, but we still have idolatry in our hearts. How do we deal with it? Well, if you've allowed a desire to grow in your heart and displace God, to become an idol, what steps should you take? Well, this morning, I want us to look briefly at a biblical response to idolatry. You see, Scripture demands that we take our idolatry seriously. And it outlines at least four responses we must make to tear down the idols of our hearts. If you're serious about dealing with your own idolatry, here is how you do it.

The first response, the first biblical response to idolatry is: get rid of everything connected to your idolatry. Get rid of everything connected to your idolatry. There are a number of passages that make this point in the Old Testament, as God prepares His people for entering the promised land. Turn back in Numbers. Numbers 33. In Numbers 33, we learn in verse 50, that the people of Israel are done with their forty years of wilderness wandering, and now they are on the verge of entering the promised land. Numbers 33:50:

... the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho,..., [and this is what He said:] “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places; Then you shall take possession.”

If you turn over just a few pages to Deuteronomy 7, still they are on the plains of Moab, outside of Jericho. Deuteronomy 7:5, Moses gives this same instruction again: “But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their *sacred* pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.”

You turn over to chapter 12:3: you see this same warning: “You shall tear down their altars and smash their *sacred* pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place.”

Now, why? Why is it so important to demolish all of these idolatrous images? Well, in the contest of each of those passages the warning is very clear. It's because of the potential influence that will have on the people of God. There is a powerful lesson for us here. Now remember for a moment that most of the time, those images, those idols, were merely representatives, or reminders, of the actual deities. In other words, that piece of wood, for the most part, wasn't thought of as the god, but merely as a mechanism through which to worship the god. Most of the gods were thought of in human images, human terms. And so that image was a facilitator of their worship of their false god. Whatever facilitates our personal idolatry, whatever it is, cannot be merely ignored; it cannot be put in a closet; it cannot be merely kept under lock and key: it must be destroyed. We must get it out of our lives.

This idea isn't just in the Old Testament. There's a clear New Testament example of it as well. Turn over to Acts 19. In Acts 19 you remember Paul ministered in Ephesus, and in Ephesus there was a group of people who came to faith in Christ, who had an interesting background. Look down at verse 19. Let's go back to verse 18, rather:

Many also of those who had believed [this Acts 19:18] Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and *began* burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Now what's going on here? Here you have new Christians who recognized that they have in their possession, in their homes, parts of their idolatrous worship before Christ. And they bring these books of magic, the various forms the ancient mystery religions took in ancient Ephesus, but they bring it together in all of its forms, they make a large bonfire, and they burn it. Now, don't miss the significance to this. Luke wants us to see what this cost them. You notice the end of verse 19, "... the price of them was fifty thousand pieces of silver." probably a reference to the Greek drachma. A Greek drachma was probably the equivalent of a day's wage. These people in Ephesus burned a small fortune in books: fifty thousand days' work gone, up in smoke. That's just how important it was for them to get rid of those things that connected them to the idolatry that was a part of their old life.

Jesus expresses the same concept in somewhat different language in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. He tells us: "You've heard," this is verse 27 of Matthew 5:

"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already

committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Now Jesus here is not encouraging self-mutilation. That doesn't solve the problem of the heart. Instead, what Jesus is saying is this: we must be willing to take radical steps to deal with our sin. Radical steps, to the point, as it were figuratively speaking, of ripping out an eye or cutting off a hand. That includes the desires of our hearts that have become idolatrous. We must take whatever steps possible to deal with that sin.

Now let me ask you a question: what do you have in your possession that promotes and encourages your idolatry, whatever form it takes, What do you have that promotes and encourages your idolatry? You need to get rid of it. Some of you, for example, need to get rid of your television, or your internet connection, because you are using it to satisfy the idol of sexual sin. Maybe there's a relationship that you're pursuing, that has become more important to you than obeying Christ. Maybe there are, ladies, books at home, that portray unrealistic pictures of marriage, and have created an idol in your heart. Rather than loving, and ministering to your husband, you've created an idol. Throw them out. Maybe your problem is materialism and wealth. That has become your idol. Are you living in a house, or driving a car, that you know you really can't afford? That may be a sign that things have become an idol. And you need to get rid of them.

Or maybe you have great financial resources, but you look around your home and your garage and your closets, and you see sinful extravagance. If it facilitates your idolatry, then it may need to go. Or maybe you need to determine to be especially generous, as 1 Timothy 6 urges those who are rich in this world to be. If your idol is some substance, then get rid of your drug paraphernalia. Dump your stash of drugs and alcohol. You see, you and I must ask ourselves what is it in our closets and in our cars and in our offices and in our homes, that encourages and promotes our idolatry? And we must rip it from our lives. You say, “Well, I need my internet connection.” Jesus said, “If your eye causes you to sin, get rid of it.”

It's a lot less trouble to get something other than internet connection. You get the point. Get rid of everything connected to your idolatry. Don't tolerate it in your life. Because it will only provide the opportunity. We're good at that, aren't we? We sort of leave ourselves and out (21:11), “God, I'm repentant, I don't want to come back to this idol in my heart,” but then the

thing that facilitates it, sitting over on the shelf, or in the closet or, wherever. Get rid of everything connected to your idolatry.

There's a second biblical response to idolatry that is related to the first, but is distinct from it. Number two: avoid, avoid anything, that draws you back to your idolatrous desire. Not only do you get rid of the stuff out of your life, but then you avoid anything from that time forward that would draw you back into that idolatrous desire. In Deuteronomy 7, in fact turn there with me. Deuteronomy 7, again Moses on the plains of Moab, telling Israel how to deal with the idolatry they're going to face. He says in verse 25:

“The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, or you will be snared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. “You shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned.”

Now before he actually dealt with the images themselves, those we're to smash, but there may be someone who says, “Look, we need to get rid of that idol. I understand people will be worshiping that, but look at the gold and the precious metal on that idol. There's nothing wrong with that. An idol is nothing, I'm not going to worship that idol. I'm just going to take the silver and the gold.” You know what God says? Even that could suck into that idolatry. Stay away from it. Have nothing to do with it.

The lesson here is that you and I are to abstain from all those things, to avoid all those things that could draw us into idolatry. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul in the New Testament tells the Corinthians who came out of idolatry the same basic point. In 1 Corinthians 10:14, he says, “My beloved, flee, run, from idolatry.” And then he goes on to talk about the problem. Verse 20, excuse me, verse 19:

What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I *say* that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? ...

You see, here's what's happening. These people, who were part of that Corinthian culture, had been saved out of that idolatry, and now they were tempted to rejoin their friends in going to the

celebrations at the temple. They were saying to themselves, “Well, it’s no problem. I know an idol is nothing. I know there is no god there. I worship and serve the true God. I’m just going to go back and have a party with my friends.” And Paul says don’t even think about it. Don’t even think about going back into that temple, and enjoying that celebration. Run from that which will draw you back into that idolatry.

What does this look like for you? Well, it may mean that you need to stay away from some person who encourages you to satisfy your craving. You know the kind of people in your office who say things like, “Why do you stay with her?” “Why do you put up with him?” “You have a right to be happy.” or “Here, have another drink.” or “You deserve better.” or “Hey, take a look at this.” It might be a job that provides too much anonymity and too much opportunity to worship your idol. You may need to change jobs. You may even need to change careers. It might be certain circumstances that you need to avoid. For all of us there are certain times and certain circumstances, when we’re almost likely to sin. Do whatever you have to do, to avoid those circumstances, to avoid anything that would draw you in.

Ask yourself this basic question: who encourages me to pursue my idolatrous desire? What encourages me to pursue my idolatrous desire? And what circumstances encourage me to pursue my idolatrous desire? And whatever the answers are, create a plan to run, to flee, to stay away from those things at all costs.

A third biblical response to idolatry is: don’t associate with those who put other things before the Lord. Don’t associate with those who put other things before the Lord. In Deuteronomy 7, Deuteronomy 7, Moses makes this warning very clear to the people of Israel. Deuteronomy 7:1,

“When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away” ... [these] seven nations that are greater and stronger than you, verse 2, “... when ... [He] delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them.” We’re talking not about the idols, but about the people in this case.] “You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. Why? For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods....”

You know, what this passage is alluding to, this passage and dozens of others that I could take you to, they are describing the influence that idolaters have on the people of God. You see, God has established this world so that you have the power to influence others, and they in turn have

the power to influence you. And we have to be constantly aware of the influence that others can bring into our lives. Turn to 1 Corinthians 5. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul deals with this very issue of influence, particularly when it's in the church, connected to the church, 1 Corinthians 5, you remember the situation here is that the Corinthian church was tolerating someone who was living in incest. And in fact, according to verse 6, they were even boasting about it, that is, they were boasting perhaps about their tolerance, about their wide-heartedness, to accept this person who had chosen a different lifestyle. And he says, "Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?" It's a lot like our saying that one rotten apple spoils the barrel.

You know, as I thought about that this week, I was interested in the fact that when we speak of the power of influence, we use fruit, and rottenness which frankly takes some time to set in and develop, doesn't it? When God speaks of the power of influence, He uses the image of yeast. Now my wife has a wonderful tradition that she has brought from her family: and that is, on an almost weekly basis her mom would make this wonderful homemade potato bread. It sort of freaks my kids out when she talks about feeding the starter, but apart from that, they love this bread that she makes, and I do as well. Of course, the key ingredient is yeast.

Now, I don't know if you anything about this or not, but I didn't know much about it until this week; I decided to go to Fleischman's web site and learn what I could learn about yeast because this is a fascinating image. You see, the process to grow yeast is fascinating. My wife doesn't grow it. She, like you, if you make bread, buys it in those little packages, those little freeze-dried packages, then uses it, mixes it in with the dough. But the first step that the company uses to produce yeast is, using a very strong microscope, they identify one yeast cell from the strain of yeast that they want to use.

And once they've identified that one cell, they then plant it in a sterile test tube that contains all the nutrients necessary for yeast to grow. And in that tube, the yeast cell, that one yeast cell, reproduces, by budding, by multiplying cell. And by the time the yeast is ready to be harvested, that one yeast cell that they started with will have grown into tons, literally tons, of yeast. And when yeast is added to the flour in my wife's kitchen, if you could see it under a microscope, it literally is "exploding" into all the cells around it. That is a picture of the power of influence.

You have to ask yourself, what's the yeast in your life? Or who? Who are your best friends? Do they encourage your pursuit of God, and Him alone? Or do they instead encourage your idolatry, encourage the pursuit of your desires? Don't associate with those who put other things before the Lord, and encourage you to do the same, both with their words and their example.

Now obviously, later here in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul says, primarily when he's talking about associating, he's talking about joining up, connecting to, having a deep friendship with obviously you have to associate with people of the world, who are idolaters. But we're to have no connection whatsoever with those who are in the church, who are guilty of that. But the point is, the power of influence. And we're to protect ourselves from that influence, with the church as a whole (verse 13, "... REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES) and individually, we're to protect ourselves from those sinful influences.

A fourth response to idolatry is: pursue biblical sanctification, pursue biblical sanctification. Back to Colossians 3, which we looked at a couple of weeks ago. Colossians 3, he mentions "covetousness", or these strong desires which are idolatry, in the context of sanctification. He begins in verses 1 to 4 of chapter 3, telling us who we have become in Christ. And he says, "Therefore" verse 5, "consider the members of your earthly body as dead..." literally, put to death the members which are upon the earth. Now he's not talking about asceticism or some form of self-mutilation. You can't make rules to curb the cravings of your flesh: the flesh has no power to control the flesh. So how does it happen? How do we put to death these sinful tendencies? Well, if you were here, and I hope you were, if you weren't, I encourage you to go online or get the CDs, when we talked about sanctification, that there's nothing more important for you as a believer than that, understanding how sanctification works. It really comes down, according to Ephesians, to basically three basic steps: put off the sinful tendencies that are a part of your life; be renewed in your thinking by the power of the Spirit and the Word; and thirdly, to put on the positive virtues that should be in the place of those vices.

We've talked about that at length. That's what we have to do. God is not going to zap us; we have to put to death our tendency to idolatry by putting off, by being renewed, and by putting on. We must extend the maximum effort to obey, and as we do, then God does what we can never do: He changes our hearts. He changes our desires. He changes our affections. So, we fight idolatry, then, according to this passage, by following the normal process of sanctification. That is by putting it off; recognizing it, acknowledging it, confessing it, and seeking to put it off from our lives by allowing the Word of God and the Spirit of God to renew our thinking. That's what we're doing in our study of worship and idolatry, and then we put on the opposite of idolatry. The question is, what do we put on? What is the opposite of idolatry?

And that brings us to our final biblical response to idolatry. Number five, here it is: find your pleasure and delight in God. Find your pleasure and delight in God. Turn back to Jeremiah 2. The prophet Jeremiah puts his finger on this very truth. In verses 7 and 8, Jeremiah says, look,

God brought you into the land, and soon after you got into the land, you began pursuing idolatry, particularly Baal worship. So, “Therefore,” verse 9, “I will yet contend with you.” God uses the language of the courtroom. Literally, He says, I’ve got a court case against you. I’ve got a suit against you. The Hebrew expression implies that very strong metaphor. Now why? Well, in verses 10 - 12, he says it’s because you’ve done something that never happens. It’s hard to believe. It’s never been done before.

“... cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see, ... send to Kedar and observe closely”. [In other words, reach out to the lands around us,] “And see if there has been such *a thing* as this! “Has a nation changed gods When they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory For that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, ...” [Now in verse 13, he comes to the two evils that Israel has committed:] “For My people have committed two evils:” [number one:] “They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters,” [Number two: they have hewn] ... “for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.”

Now what’s going on here? Well, the image behind this verse is of a drought-stricken country. You and I are in the middle of a drought in North Texas, but those who live in truly arid places in the world would laugh at us, for thinking this is a drought. In a drought like he’s talking about, there’s no rain, every piece of vegetation dies, the earth itself begins to crack on the surface and there are even fissures in the ground, because there’s no water, there’s no moisture. In that kind of environment, typically there are only two sources of water. There’s either a fresh water fountain, or there’s collected rain water. That’s it. A fresh water fountain that bubbles up, or you dig down and get to the water level, the water table, or a collection of rain water. Now obviously, if you had a choice, which would you prefer? You’d prefer the fresh water, the fresh fountain. Imagine then, Jeremiah says, people living in a drought, who abandoned the fountain right on their own property, and instead, right next to that fresh water fountain, they dig a cistern, an underground container that collects rain water, but the cistern they dig isn’t even water-proof. It lets the precious, life-giving, life-sustaining water seep back into the ground, wasted.

Now what’s going on here? Jeremiah is making this basic point: that when people abandon a single-minded devotion to God, it’s because they have concluded that God alone cannot satisfy their needs. That’s the only reason you abandon your fountain, for a broken cistern that you dig. People conclude that what they need can only be obtained somewhere else. And Jeremiah is calling these people to realize what they have in God. In God, you don’t have a broken cistern

that won't hold any water; you have a living fountain of fresh water. Drink deeply, and be satisfied.

If you and I are going to overcome idolatry in our hearts, then, ultimately, we must find our joy, our delight, in God. That's what your heart is crying out for. That's why you're worshipping that idol. You're looking for something that could never be found outside of God.

Augustine, the most influential figure in the history of the Church next to Apostle Paul, for the thirty years before his conversion, he was an idolater. In his case, he was absolutely enslaved to sexual sin. But listen to the work of grace in Augustine's heart, as he described it. He says,

“As I grew to manhood, I was inflamed with desire for a surfeit of hell's pleasures. I went to Carthage, where I found myself in the midst of a hissing cauldron of lust.” [But then, listen to how he describes his rescue.] “How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose ...!”

Isn't that how all our idols are? They are fruitless joys that we fear to lose. But he said, “How sweet it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose.” How? “You drove them from me, You who are the true, the sovereign joy, You drove them from me and took their place.”

Augustine, how did you overcome the idolatry of sexual sin that controlled you, enslaved you your whole life? If he were this morning, he would say, “It's because I learned that in God is true delight.” As the psalmist says in Psalm 16, “In Your right hand, [at Your right hand] there are pleasures forevermore.”

If you and I really believe that, if we really believed that God was the fountain from which all true joy and pleasure comes, we would never seek it elsewhere. The only way to permanently destroy our idols is to replace them with a love for, and a delight in, the true God. And, specifically for us, as New Testament Christians, that means to center our lives in Christ and His sacrifice. In fact, turn back with me, as I finish my message this morning, to 2 Chronicles. Second Chronicles 30. There's a fascinating circumstance that happens in Old Testament Israel. Hezekiah, the righteous king Hezekiah, comes to power, and for the first time in a long time, he institutes the celebration of Passover. Second Chronicles 30:13, they gathered the people at Jerusalem. In verse 15 they slaughtered the Passover *lamb*s on the fourteenth of the second month. In fact, verse 23 says they decided to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread for another seven days. It was, according to verse 26, a time of great joy:

So there was great joy in Jerusalem, because there was nothing like this in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel. Then the Levitical priests arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard and their prayer came to His holy dwelling place, to heaven.”

How did they respond? Verse 1, chapter 31, “Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the Asherim and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, as well as in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the sons of Israel returned to their cities, each to his possession.”

Do you see the point here? As the people of God celebrated the reality at Passover, that by means of the death of an innocent substitute, God would provide for their sins. They were compelled to leave that place and go through the land and tear down every idol.

That’s my prayer for us today. That as we celebrate Christ, our Passover, as we think about His death, may you and I be eager to tear down every idol of our heart, and have no god but God, and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let’s pray together.

Our Father, we thank You for the blood of Christ. We thank You that He willingly, gladly poured out His life in the place of we who deserve that death. And not just the death of a couple of days, but eternal death, banished from Your presence, in hell forever.

Father, we thank You for such incredible grace shown to us, and we pray Father, that You would enable us to respond to the death of Christ in our contemplation of it in the same way that those Old Testament children of God did when they celebrated the Passover and immediately tore down their idols.

Lord, as we have celebrated the Christ as our Passover, help us to leave this place, eager to rip every idol from our hearts, and worship You alone.

We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen!