

# The Idolatry of Self

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today I want to talk about the idolatry of self.! We'll unpack that through these different scriptures.

! I want to begin with an illustration that begins how I want to look at things.! In 1989, I signed my life away, so to speak, and went to the Navy.

Went to boot camp and there I learned how to be a sailor. That was what they taught us. And nobody, the whole group, we all went in and we learned the same thing. They sort of broke our will, if you know, to become a sailor. No longer a civilian. Now we are something different and that would be how we were to operate for however many years. Six is what I did. I was a sailor for six years after that. And so we all did that. But by the end of boot camp, everyone graduated and so forth.

And nobody at that point looked around and said, I want to ride on a tank. Where's my tank?

I want to go across the land on a tank. Nobody said that. Nobody said that. Because we were all there to be sailors. We were all going to sea. We were not going to be on tanks. If you guys don't know how the Navy works. There is no tanks there. So we were all going to go to sea. So this new group of men that were all assembled were going to be on a boat, a submarine, a ship or something like that. And that's why we were assembled and what they taught us to do. And frankly, what we signed up to do.

Well, what are we here at Christ Church? What are we assembled to do? We have a statement and that is the kingdom of God in all of life together. And there's a lot more that goes to the purpose of our assembling. But in a nutshell, that is what we gather under is that purpose statement. And we are no longer, we don't look to other things, specifically other things that maybe me as an individual want to be or do or deem important. It is Christ Church. It is God's will for us as a body, as a church. That's how we operate. In other words, the group, the church, the body is in jeopardy when individuals seek and idolize themselves to the detriment of the unity of the body. So if any of us individually seek our own will, our own way, our own sense of what should or shouldn't be, that is a detriment to the body of Christ. And that will create trouble and division and problems.

[ 3 : 10 ] So today, I want to talk about this particular thought of idolatry of self, because we're about to launch into a couple of months of talking about partnership, talking about the church.

And if we aren't thinking in terms of a body, and we're thinking individually, the church won't exist the way it should exist, the way that a unified body is supposed to exist. And so this is something that we need to iron out, each of us, before we understand fully the purposes of the church.

So the church is a unified body. Idolatry of self, and we'll talk about idolatry in just a second, but idolatry of self will isolate, divide, and play into the devil's schemes against the body.

That's how it will work out. When we are working and thinking and operating as individuals in a sinful way, that's going to play right into what the devil wants to do with the body of Christ, with our church, with Christ's church. And that cannot be. So over the next months, as we learn about the church and partnership, let's lay down our lives and understand the church rightly. And so that's my encouragement to us today. We're not going to ride a tank. We're going to see. All right. To sort of follow up with my illustration there. So the first thing is the problem of idolatry. So let's talk about that first and deal with that issue. So turn to Romans chapter one, looking at 24 and 25. Romans chapter one, verses 24 and 25.

Paul says there, Amen.

[ 5 : 38 ] So you see the problem here. There's a worshiping of the creature instead of the creator, the thing rather than God. There's eyes.

So this, what, who he's speaking to here is mankind. So people who are believers, people who are not believers, the fundamental problem of man, of us, each one of us is this issue where we look at

and think about and worship what has been made and not the one who made everything. It's, it's, uh, if you go back to Adam and Eve, what was their interest? What was, why did, why did sin enter in the first place?

They started to look at and worship things from inside what they wanted rather than the creator that, that, that, uh, was right there walking with him.

So what, what would some of the creature or created things be? And this is where we start to look at, okay, as we whittle this down, this idea of idolatry, where is this in my life? Where does it show up? How does it show up? What does it look like? We'll talk about those things. Here's some areas in which we may worship the creature or the created thing, spouse, children, our church, my job, money, safety, time, fun, leisure time, and self. A lot of these are born from self. A lot of these are born from the things that we seek inside for whatever reason, things that are opposed to God. And it is the idolatry that we will put on that pedestal that is generated out of our own hearts. And that's the idolatry of self. All the things of self, your life, your loves, your interests, your position, all these things are easily, easily what will supplant the Lord himself in our hearts. And we'll put something else there and follow that. Idolatry is elevating the creature above the creator. And idolatry is a vertical problem. It's a problem between ourselves and God. Now that vertical problem, though, plays out and the fruit is horizontal. So when I am not right with God, when I have myself where the Lord Jesus should be in my heart, that is going to show with other people. It's going to show as I walk that out with this body. It will be seen. It's understood.

Fruit of the problem is always going to be seen in relationships. Timothy Keller says, when we worship an idol in his place, he is no longer, Jesus is no longer the one thing we have to have in life. Something else is. It rules us. And ultimately, we will do anything, however destructive to ourselves or to others, to have it, increase it, and keep it. That's what idolatry will do. It will run us down a path that is so selfish and so individually minded that we'll bring that here and we will fight with one another to get what we want. Believing lies and maintaining idols will be divisive. It will be divisive. [ 9 : 35 ] Especially in the church. It will be in a family too. It will be between friends, between relationships, but especially in the church where there's unity. Should be. Where there should be unity.

Well, there's some commands for fellowship. There's some commands that are directly opposed to individual idolatry. Number one, Ephesians 5.21, submit to one another. If I'm about my idolatrous position on things, I cannot submit to one another in the church. I can't.

Ephesians 2.3, consider others as more important than yourself. 1 John 3.16, lay down your life for the brothers, just like Jesus did. Follow what he did in love.

And we lay down our life for the brothers and the sisters, the body. Those in the church acknowledge Jesus as the head of the church. Following, trusting, obeying. It's his church, not ours. As a believer, we say that, Jesus, you are now my master. I am now following you. I sacrifice all to follow you.

[ 11 : 04 ] But then self creeps in. Then the self wants to take over portions of that, wants to take Jesus down off of the throne of your heart and put other things in place.

Idolatry occurs as one begins to put the self first and find a new compass.

A new compass is seen there. So instead of taking the scripture and following Christ, a compass that's designed by self shows up. And that compass is off. And it wants its own way. It wants to do what the flesh wants to do.

What one thinks is right instead of what the Lord says is right. And it's a faulty compass. So things turn inward. My ideas, my concerns, my needs, my hurts.

That becomes the most important thing. As I gather in a unified body, I'm not interested in anybody else's. It's my thing. That becomes most important. I've lost the compass there.

[ 12 : 22 ] And there becomes a lack of unity. And then people start turning on others or backing away from others. Not trusting in God in interactions with one another. Not leaning on the spirit for that, for the encouragement and fruit and words that only come from the spirit.

So my encouragement to you today as we finish out this study. That's idolatry. That's idolatry. That's the idea behind idolatry.

So my encouragement to you is consider your heart. Trace your passions. So consider your heart. Where are you? Are you putting something before Christ himself in your heart?

And if you see that, then trace those passions. And identify your object of worship. Hopefully, it's Jesus.

If it's not, we'll talk about some of the fruit of that. How do we know? How do we know if it's not? Well, we'll talk about that. But as you see things, as you look at your heart, this is pretty much all messages are supposed to be something where we take and we apply to ourselves, right? [13:44] We're not supposed to be thinking of everybody else, in other words. This is especially, right? I would say that for any of God's word that comes to us. But this one in particular, this is something that only you in your heart can supplant Christ for something that you think is more important.

Nobody else can do that. No one else can make you do that. And so you take that. And if you see fruit that's bad, trace it down. What is it that you're making more important than Christ? And so that's my encouragement to you as we go through this. There is a solution. Strangely enough, right? The Lord provides a solution to this. And I want to continue, actually. I'm going to pick up from where Zemir was last week in Psalm 139. Zemir, back here. Thank you. Yep. I want to pick up. And so if you turn to Psalm 139. Turn to Psalm 139. And we know the first part, what Zemir shared last week, was just the greatness of God, the all-powerful, all-knowing attributes of God, right? [14:55] So that's the context that we read, verses 23 and 24 of Psalm 139. So you have to remember that context, okay?

And in 23, starting with 23, he says, Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any grievous way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. So the first thing he says there, the first idea is search me. So that all-knowing God, that all-powerful God, search me. This is a position of the heart, right? Because number one, God already knows. We've already identified. He knows all this already. Who doesn't? Me. I don't know it. I don't know what he has for me. I don't, I can't search like he searches me. He knows my depths, right? So the heart posture is, Lord, you know, so search me. [16:05] Look, take a look at my heart. Take a look at my priorities, at my passions, at things that I've got out of whack. Search those things.

Know my heart. And please search it. Are you willing for God to do this? Are you willing for God to do this? Not a self-help book. Not something that you use to sort of diagnose yourself. Not looking across your life and saying, well, I think that this is, you know, whatever. I think this isn't very good. I think I'm okay here. None of that. Are you willing for God who knows all to search you? There is a willingness there that to go any further, you have to be open to. You have to be open to that. Will you submit to his searching? And not only his searching, but what he actually finds and tells you about. [17:14] Are you willing to have that? For him to work in that way in your life? If the idols are going to go, they've got to be pointed out.

You have to know what to confess. You have to know what to repent from. God will tell you. He will tell you. God knows hearts. We confuse things. We mess it up. He knows hearts. We don't. Even our own. We run on emotions or feelings. The flesh, basically. This is what we operate on. And whatever seems to sometimes, whatever makes us feel better or gets us going this way or that way, just to maybe get heat off our back a little bit. That's the things that we're more inclined to pursue. Instead of the searching that opens up spaces in our hearts that have to be cleaned out. [18:17] We run up against an immovable object in this because he speaks the pure words of doctrine.

When we look at scripture and he shows us, we say, Lord, will you search me? And then he shows us something. Where is it going to be found? Well, in his word. That's his will for us. We'll see it in his word. And when we see it in his word, now we're up against an immovable object there. Am I going to be broken on that rock of doctrine? Or am I going to fight it? Am I going to believe what he says? Or am I going to fight it? I've asked him to search me and show me. Then he does.

Now, what do you do? What do you do? Do you ignore it? Do you continue to hear? Do you go on? And to the next thing that he talks about?

[ 19 : 22 ] His truth will not budge. That means if we're going to follow him, who budges? It's us. Right? We're the ones that have to change. He's not going to change.

His word is not going to change. It's us. We're the ones. And that has to happen. It has to happen. The second thing he says in that verse, he says, try me.

So search me and try me. How will he do this? How will he try me?

Has anybody ever been tried? I did a marketing visit to a little clinic down in the country. So the marketing visit, what it was, I had set up a time for a luncheon.

It's a little clinic and there's like three people there. There's a nurse practitioner and a couple others. And so I set up this time to go down for a lunch.

[ 20 : 29 ] And the girl at the desk, she says, yeah, you can have this time and that lunch hour and everything. I said, am I expected to bring the lunch?

And she said, yeah. So I said, OK, that's good. I don't typically do this type of marketing. So it's kind of new to me a little bit. Lessons learned. But so I said, OK, so I'll bring lunch and we'll meet on such and such day.

And that was great. So it was the day before. And, you know, I'm thinking maybe get a pizza or some sandwiches or something, you know, lunch stuff. I don't know, whatever.

I said, whatever you guys want, you know, let me know and I'll pick it up. And so that morning I get a text and apparently they wanted Olive Garden, which I didn't anticipate Olive Garden.

But OK, I did put parameters on it. My fault. And so let's let's do Olive Garden. And then they sent me their menu from Olive Garden. Well, if you are familiar with Olive Garden, they have entrees, which is like the full thing.

[ 21 : 35 ] And then they have lunches and the lunches are like half the price of an entree. They all ordered entrees, not the lunch thing, which was for lunch.

They all ordered entrees. And there was a fourth person that joined. Surprise, surprise. And so they all ordered the entrees. And then they all got the special five dollar drinks.

And then a couple of them got the ten dollar dessert. And I was a little bit upset at this. Right. I thought, oh, I kind of feel like they're taking advantage of me a little bit.

But I didn't put any parameters on it. I didn't say one way or another, you know. And so I get there and put out everything on this little kitchen space that they had.

And they kind of flocked in like vultures and they all grabbed their food and split. Except for one person. And so a hundred and forty dollar bill.

[ 22 : 37 ] I got to talk to one person for about 30 minutes. So at that point, I thought about this idea of trials. Right.

Was God allowing this to try me in this moment? You know, like, Chris, what will you do? What will you do about this?

Will you get mad? Will you look on them with disdain? Will you throw big ziti at them? You know. So the trials, they come all the time.

They come in every which way, in every style. And the try here is, it's like a prove or a test. So search me.

Lord, show me these areas. And then try me. Let's walk this out. The search means that we're open to God's revelation. And then the trying basically answers the question.

[ 23 : 35 ] Did the revelation of what he showed me make it actually to my heart? Did it actually sink in? You know. I don't know that I have. Well, nobody likes to be taken advantage of, you know.

But that was something that, okay, let's try this. You know. Truly. Chris, how are you going to respond? Do I confess it?

When God shows me something in my life that I, that he gives me like that? And then tries me and, you know.

Do I confess my sin there? Do I repent? Verse 24. He said the last part. And see if there's any grievous way in me.

So in that testing. Is there things that aren't right? Is there still those things that aren't right? And that sin that's still lurking in those spaces?

[ 24 : 39 ] Because we will be tested, won't we? We will be. The third thing he says is, lead me in the way everlasting. In other words, I think if you could sum that up, it would be, be my God.

Be my God. No idol. No idol. Search me. I'm open to this. Try me. Test me, Lord. Make me stronger. Refine me. And be my God. When I went to sign up for the Navy, this, this, I took the test and, and they liked how I did.

I, I, I didn't think I really had very many brains to work with, but, but they liked how I did. And so I sat across from the recruiter guy. And I, at that point, I really didn't care where I went or what happened or whatever.

And, and he says, well, you know, you got to get a job and, and they got to know where to, put you and send you. And so he says, Hey, how about electronics?

[ 25 : 46 ] And I was like, all right. And he says, how about on a submarine? And I said, okay. And so that's what they did. They taught me electronics and put me on a submarine. I never thought about it.

I never, you know, I just, I just signed up to, to learn these things. And then I followed their orders. I followed what they told me to do, um, and walk that out.

Now, if I had got to the submarine, if I had got there and the very first time that we're, we're going out and then all of a sudden they say, dive, dive.

And the thing starts going underwater. And I, I wake up and I'm like, Hey, what's going on here? You know, uh, that, that would not, uh, make a lot of sense with it, you know, um, because that's what I signed up to do was to go underwater in something, a tube.

Um, and, uh, so that's sort of, uh, if you think about how ludicrous that statement would be at that point. Okay. Well, have you ever said, Lord, be my God, lead me.

[ 26 : 57 ] Have you ever said that to the Lord? Lead me, be my God. And then when he starts to lead you, you pump the brakes and you say, wait a minute, what's happening here?

What are you doing? What are you doing? Has that ever been the case? Search me, help me identify the sin. The lies, the idolatry that stands between us.

Try me, grow me through refinement and opportunities to walk in faith and lead me. Give me the paths of righteousness to follow you. This is the solution to idolatry.

This is the solution right there. Confession of sin and repentance. Let me give you an example. Um, so, uh, one, one thing that, that is, is talked about a bit or that, that comes up often, especially in today's world is, uh, different, different ways to discipline in parenting.

Well, one of those ways that sort of a lightning rod is spanking. And, uh, that's something that is awesome conversation.

[ 28 : 15 ] Very important conversation. So I'm, I'm a parent. Uh, the kids are older now, but, um, but I'm a parent and there was at some point I had to answer this question.

How does discipline look? So where do I go? Okay. Lord search me. I, uh, uh, be my God. And he says in his word very clearly that spanking is a part of discipline.

That's a part. Okay. I read that. I see that. Um, so I can, at that point, I can fight what he says.

Now this, this applies to so many different things. I'm just using this as an example. I can fight that. I can go against that immovable object of God and what he says.

I asked him, search me, show me your way, be my God. And then he tells me, do I follow?

[ 29 : 20 ] Yeah. Do I follow him? Because you know what? If I take that as a discipline measure, do you think I'm going to be tried? Probably that day, maybe that hour, maybe, you know, and I'll have to make those decisions according to what God tells me to do from his word.

And then he leads us. And then you see the fruit. You see the fruit of a person who follows, who hears, who truly takes his word in and truly follows and leads, is led, then everlasting.

So the next question, how does this principle affect the body? How does it affect us as a church? The principle of, of, uh, idolatry.

If you would turn to first Peter three, eight, first Peter chapter three and verse eight. Finally, all of you have unity of mind.

Is look at, uh, what does idol, less idol, no idols, idol, less.

[ 30 : 51 ] What does the church look like when it's idol, less? Make sense. Okay. First Peter three, eight. Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

We can take this verse and use it to inspect the fruit of our life in the body. Specifically. We can take this verse and use it. Peter's writing to the church at a time when the persecution was super high.

And they were saying, why is this happening? Why is this happening? And he's encouraging them in this way to keep their eyes on Christ and don't get sidetracked.

Don't start to apply your own thinking. Don't do these things. This is what you should look like. This is what the body should look like.

This type of fruit. Okay. Okay. So now in this, what we're going to do is we're going to look at each of these, uh, ideas. Now there is a, is the fruit that we're looking for, but there is also the fruit of, uh, uh, where idols would get, would, would take the stage.

[ 32 : 15 ] Okay. So in other words, there's a, there's a good, uh, the good fruit, but there's also an indicator of bad fruit when these particular characteristics are gone the wrong way.

Make sense. Let's do one and we'll go through and you'll understand if I'm not explaining it right.

Uh, so the first thing, finally, all of you have unity of mind, unity of mind.

So basically that is being together, rowing the same way, right? We don't have some people trying to go the other way. We're all rowing together and submitting to leadership, unity of mind.

We're all thinking together in that as a body. So idolatry fruit instead of unity, when idolatry is present, then what does it look like?

Well, number one, it would be lifting high my own way. This is a body. It's a unified body, all going the same direction.

[ 33 : 17 ] If I have idols that are not Christ, the spirit is speaking for us to move together. If I have idols that are not Christ, I'll start lifting up my way.

My way is most important. My way is what should happen. Is that divisive? Absolutely. That's divisive. It'll cut at the core. Going against leaders, complaining, gathering others to divisive causes. Basically doing anything that threatens unity. Anything that threatens unity. If that is the fruit, if that's what, as you say, God, search me.

Search me. Try me. Am I doing anything that's threatening the unity of this body? Second thing.

Sympathy. Sympathy. Weep with those who weep. It's a giving of self. Like a very deep, deep place there that you go with other people and care for them and love them.

[ 34 : 29 ] Walking in other shoes, you know, like understanding. So what about the fruit of idolatry instead of sympathy?

What would the fruit look like in that? Well, a person would be focused on their own pain. They come to the group and they interact in fellowship.

But the only thing that's ever shared is their own pain. They never walk with anybody else. Never listen. Never go deep with somebody else.

And what's going on with them. Brings everything back to themselves. They hear the pain. They hear what's going on.

And everything comes back to self. Not having any time for other people who are in their pain.

[ 35 : 25 ] That's a lack of sympathy. A lack of sympathy. Or minimizing others' troubles. Thinking that it's not as important.

Sometimes with children. It's easy to do. Like, you know, a four-year-old's problems are not something we would consider a problem.

But the thing is, it is to them. Right? It is to them. And sympathy and care would go with a four-year-old. And listen.

And be a part of that. And engage with them in a loving way. But it's the same thing with adults.

Sometimes we can minimize somebody else's issues. The things that we know.

Oh, that's not a big deal. It is to them. How do you care for them? Third thing is brotherly love. What is it?

[ 36 : 23 ] In a good way? In a unified body? Brotherly love. Considering others more important than ourselves. We already talked about that verse. Laying down my life for the brothers. It's all of that concept of just loving one another.

Sacrificially. It's not about me. It's like I'm willing to sacrifice for you in love. How about the fruit of idolatry in this?

Instead of love, the fruit is considering my needs as most important. choosing me when I have something to give.

So in other words, if I have time and money and energy and all these things and I choose not to give it, that is a fruit of idolatry.

If it's a sin, if I have it and don't give it. Bible says that's a sin. It's a closed heart, not an open heart. When our hearts are closed to others, that is putting us, ourselves, on the throne.

[ 37 : 38 ] Not willing to be sacrificially minded. How about a tender heart? The next one there. Tender heart. As kind, compassionate, willing to see somebody in their situation.

That tenderness that we should have one for another. What does idolatry look like? Expecting everyone to care for me without caring for others.

But I expect everyone to care for me. Do you hear like a trend, by the way, with the idolatry? Everything is I, me, self. Do you hear the trend?

That's, that's, we get this, we get this. Right. No consideration of others or steamrolling other people for my own purposes or my own way. Not willing, again, to give time, energy, or any effort to others. How about this? Getting bored with somebody while they're talking to you. This, this is a choice. Right?

[ 38 : 45 ] This is a choice. It's a choice to not yawn. It's a choice to look in their eyes. It's a choice to pay attention and give feedback. There, there's no reason why you can't do that.

Other than, we're losing a tender heart. I'm thinking about myself. I'm not, I'm not engaged with somebody else. For two minutes.

Give it. Give the time. Love them. The next one is humble mind. Submitting to God, his leadership, the leadership in the church, your husband, etc.

That's what it looks like. Righteousness found in Christ, not in self. That's a humble mind. That's what a humble mind looks like. What does idolatry of self, what is the fruit then?

Number one, trusting in my own righteousness. And what is born from that? I'm going to judge you. Because if I trust in my own righteousness, I'm going to hold you to that same standard.

[ 39 : 58 ] Beginning of Romans says that very thing. Right? That I'm going to be judged by the way I judge you. Right? Sense of being higher than others.

The idea of my way or the highway. Right? This is not a humble mind. This is not a humble heart toward one another. All those, all those negative fruit characteristics point to a worship of the creature.

And not the creator. All of those characteristics point to, really, in our discussion here, a point to a worship of myself and not the creator.

It puts me squarely on that throne. And I couldn't, I could not go more wrong. It puts me squarely on that throne. Idols do not belong in Christchurch.

Our unity as a body is threatened. If we insist as individuals, if we insist on putting idols on the throne, Christchurch will not be unified.

[ 41 : 28 ] It won't. It won't. It's threatened when Jesus is not in his rightful place in our hearts.

Let's submit to God's all-knowing search of our hearts. Show me. Show me.

His trying of our lives. And the sanctification that goes with that. In those trials.

That probably are happening right now in your heart. In one way or another. As you consider these things. As he's bringing things up. And immediately you want to discard it.

Don't discard it. What's he saying? Listen. Listen to him. And let him lead you. Submission to his leadership alone.

[ 42 : 28 ] His leadership alone. Not what you think. Or not the way you feel. Or any context other than. What does God say? And then let him lead you.

Confess. Repent. Get rid of the idols. I encourage you to do that today. Hopefully.

As you consider these things. You'll look across your life. Think about the fruit of these. Of the positive. The rightful.

Unified aspects of a family. Of what Peter tells that early church to pursue. And where do you cross it? Where are you against it?

Where are you against the immovable object of God's truth? And I pray that. I pray that for all of us right now. Let's pray.

[ 43 : 26 ]