

# Break free from idolatry - go smash some idols!

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm talking about idols, idolatry, and really to lead in, see this picture here is a picture! of what we should do with idols, we should smash them, we should destroy them. We see! that in 2 Chronicles is where I'm just going to go and then to 1 John 5. So in 2 Chronicles 14 from verse 2 tells us about King Asa and it says, and Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. This is 2 Chronicles 14 verse 2. And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. For he took away the altars of the strange gods and the high places and break down the images and cut down the groves and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to do the law and the commandment.

Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images and the kingdom was quiet before him. It says that Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. Asa started off good and he had mostly a good track record although there's some things he didn't do so well towards the end. But the good thing that Asa did was he smashed the idols. And so we're going to talk about idols tonight and what we should do with them. And we're going to go to 1 John 5. 1 John 5 21 tells us this. 1 John 5 21. Little children keep yourselves from idols. Little children keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Idols. Idol worship. What is that? It's a danger to avoid the Bible says. And when you think about it idolatry it's this recurring theme through the word of God. We see it talked about numbers of times the unbelievers, the pagan nations had a proclivity to worship idols and God's people too had times and seasons where they did just that as well. Idol worship is a danger to avoid.

And idolatry in its simplest form could be defined as serving, loving, desiring or trusting anything apart from God to fulfill your needs. Idolatry. The bottom line is it replaces God. It replaces him. And when you think about idols really it substitutes the holy loving God of goodness and holiness with another object of affection. It's a substitute. A substitute. And it's a very poor substitute mind you to the almighty God isn't it? Idolatry. Idols are inferior. And you could think of it for yourself as you think other idols in my life. Do I love or treasure anything or anyone more than God? Does anything hold a higher priority in my life than my walk with him? Does anything bring me more pleasure than the things of God? Do I place my identity and anything over my status as a child of God? Do I look to anything or anyone to meet my needs instead of God? Do I seek fulfillment or satisfaction from anything outside of God? Do I seek comfort outside of God? It's a substitute when we do isn't it? For the one who should have our affection.

For the one who should have our love. Idolatry really when you think of it it's a misdirection of our worship. It's what our heart clings to. It's that elevation and glorification of anything other than him. It takes a higher place than him. We know it's wrong. And our world is such that it's godless. It's self-centered. It easily elevates other things above God such that God is displaced, replaced entirely. Of pagan Egypt it's said that there was at least 39 gods and goddesses.

[ 3 : 57 ] Of course small g not real gods or goddesses because there is only one. But we see they have these 39 false gods and it's a theme in the word of God of these idols. In 1 Corinthians 8 verse 4 in part it says we know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is none other god but one.

So when they say they're worshipping an idol it's nothing. We could have a big statue of Buddha in here and it wouldn't really make any difference because it's not a real god. It's just a lump of concrete or whatever it's made of. Not that we would mind you but you see some churches they do that. They bring all sorts of pagan statues and images into the very sanctuary to honour other religions and we know that these are nothing. Idols are nothing in the world. It's nothing but a lump of cement or metal or wood. It's purely that. It's nothing of itself. And to worship an idol is to worship nothing because it is nothing. There is no god there. And an idol is really a god that man makes for himself. The gods man makes are no gods at all. They're no gods at all. We see that in Jeremiah it reads Jeremiah 16 verse 20 shall a man make gods unto himself and they are no gods. An idol is a

substitute for god.

It's something we make. It's something in his place. And when you stop and think about it it's a quite ridiculous idea isn't it? A god that you make. A god that you fashion out of some material.

Something of your making. And you bow down and worship it. But you've made it. That's the crazy thought of it really isn't it? And it says in 1 Chronicles 16:26 for all the gods of the people are idols but the lord made the heavens. They might try to make their idols and fashion them construct them of themselves but the lord made the heavens. Just get out there tonight and look at the stars and know that your god the lord made the heavens. And these are man-made gods that is spoken off here of these idols. And of course the first commandment says worship only one god the lord our god. The second commandment warns us against making and worshipping idols. As it reads there Exodus 20 verse 4 thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Idols are false gods. Idols either to represent god or as something other than the true god are something we should not have. Even an image of our lord is something we're not to do. We're not to have. Now I suppose we might make some exception for a Sunday school book that has pictures and stuff but we wouldn't have pictures that emblazon our walls and and artwork or icons to picture our lord because it's very clear that we're not to have such an image. It reads in Isaiah 44 verse 17 it says and the residue thereof he maketh a god.

Just to explain the context here is of a man making an image. The chapter talks about a manufacturing of gods where a man labours to shape gods out of metal and of wood. And we're picking up the message the chapter here in verse 17 and the residue he's got this piece of wood and he's cutting it and shaping it and it says of the residue thereof this piece of wood he maketh a god even his graven image and he falleth down unto it and worshipeth it and prayeth unto it and saith deliver me for thou art my god. And in the passage it's talking also how he takes that same piece of wood that same tree and he uses what he didn't make for the idol he uses it for firewood. The same word that he bows down to worship what's left of the wood the firewood he throws it in the fire to cook his food.

[ 8 : 26 ] And it's a ridiculous thought really isn't it that of that same word that he bows down and worships the same god that he makes of his own making is just firewood it's the value of it.

And how can you worship a god that you make by yourself that's the foolishness of it isn't it a vain exercise and in contrast we see but our god our god is in the heavens he hath done whatsoever he hath pre-dozed their idols are silver and gold the works of men's hands they have mouths but they speak not eyes have they but they see not they have ears but they hear not noses have they but they smell not they have hands but they handle not feet have they but they walk not neither speak they through their throat these idols they've got this representation of a human form but it's all vain it's entirely false and a vain exercise and it's the same today for modern idols as we'll think about in our times we can see some different idols the idols for the modern man we've got a bit more technological now we've got a bit more advanced from cutting that piece of wood and bowing down and worshipping it but there's all kinds of modern idols that we can talk about and think about and we could think really what is that really it's anything anything that hinders or interferes with our relationship with the lord anything that occupies us and diverts us from god's way anything that we're chasing after instead of after god modern idol worships desiring something more than we desire him our lord it's placing something before god in our minds other than him it's what we fill our time up with and for the rich young ruler of luke 18:18 through 23 we see that for him he placed god lower down his priority list than his possessions he he didn't want to put god above his material needs or his possessions that he so valued god was not really the number one in his life he loved something more than he loved god and that was his idol so we can see that that was what he was worshipping and what is your most prized possession your most prized possession would you be willing to give it up if jesus asked you to give it up if your answer is no then your possession has taken god's place in your heart and become an idol now long years ago when kings used to cut people's heads off there was a clergyman who was ordered to read the proclamation that was issued at the time by king charles the first bidding the people to return to sports on sunday the king wanted the people to go back and play sports on sunday and to the congregation's amazement and horror the minister did read the royal edict in church which many clergy had refused to do he read the king's proclamation bidding the people to return to sports on sunday but he followed it with the words remember the sabbath day to keep it holy and added brethren i have laid before you the commandment of your king and the commandment of your god i leave it to you to judge which of

the two ought rather to be observed it's a thought isn't it what are we going to worship are we going to worship god or something other than him and people can make idols of all kinds of things can't we it could be we could make an idol of certain people of popularity of possessions of pleasures of things of our job of money of sports of hobbies alcohol drugs we could add many things but for some people it becomes their god they get obsessed with it and chasing after it and at the neglect of that which is righteous maybe it's something we do that we know is displeasing to our lord yet we just keep on doing it idol worship idol worship can be when we love our sin in place of honoring our lord the lord says we should obey him and honor him we see our lord says really it's the fundamental the lord jesus really sums it up here the whole scope of the law isn't it the whole thrust of really what matters what is most fundamentally true the lord jesus it says said unto this man thou shalt love the lord thy god with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind one of the other uh gospels says with all thy strength and nowadays we have some substitutes that seem to take our lord's place we've got the stars of stage of stadium rock stars today are called idols they call it australian idol don't they and many people idolize sports stars too don't they there's many idols people many idols in our world and of course we know they're just using the term lightheartedly but for some they do become like an idol i know as a youngster my sisters had certain pop stars posters on their walls and they would become like idols in their lives that they wanted to glorify them to such an extent that they would really exalt them and people can do that without putting posters on their wall they could have that adoration of something other than god and it's dangerous territory idolatry impacts the heart we see that in ezekiel 14 verse 3 where it reads son of man these men have set up their idols in their heart and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face should i be inquired of at all by them it's being truly said that the heart is an idol making factory we make idols in our heart we set up idols in our hearts and idols are really things people submit to and serve yet god's word is clear exodus 20 verse 5 thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them what is it that we're bowing down to what is it that we're honoring that we're revering that we're applying our life our time our energy to are there things in your life other than god that you virtually worship what are you bowing down to are there things that rival your lord that he should have that place that take his place things that take our devotion away from our lord we can all think about that for ourselves our lord calls us to make a choice he says for i the lord thy god am a jealous god so idols make god jealous he deserves our best not our second best and if we worship idols it hurts our lord it hurts ourselves too he wants your absolute love he's jealous with a godly jealousy it's a good jealousy because he loves you so he wants all of you not part and he says i am the lord that is my name and my glory will i not give to another neither my praise to graven images he says my glory my glory will i not give to another neither my praise to graven images so he's telling us here don't give your worship to anything else the lord deserves the lord warrants your greatest praise your deepest love and adoration the lord deserves that first place in your life the highest place and yet so easily we put him on the bottom of the list don't we when he should be on the top of the list he becomes the bottom of the list it's kind of what happens it can happen even without us thinking it we don't write god as enough to put time into worshipping him not don't write god enough to think what would god want for my life when we're deciding things when we're making decisions do we think to pray to think to get his guidance to think what would be the most glory to him the most honoring decision i can make for him and think of his love for you he says in jeremiah 31 verse 3 in part yea i have loved thee with an everlasting love therefore with loving kindness have i drawn thee his love is everlasting it's got that eternal dimension everlasting everlasting his loving kindness is towards you and considering he loves you so ought it you to love him in return ought it you to love him the one who loves you so the lover of your soul we have to give the lord a whole worship the bible warns us of having a double-mindedness it says in matthew 6 24 no man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other you cannot serve god and mammon decide to give the lord your heart to trust him more to guard yourselves from any idols to keep yourself from idols to make christ your first and foremost your aim your object your love love and run from idols we see 1 corinthians 10 14 run from it idolatry flee it says from idolatry get your running shoes on and run as far away from it as you can idolatry and we might think well in our modern world we don't have so much temples on every corner like some countries that people are burning incense to all kinds of false gods and you know some countries there's virtually millions of gods so they say and we don't have that in australia but actually when you think about it there's lots of god substitutes their idols and could it be a pursuit of wealth of financial success of material

possessions that is taking his place could we really ask ourselves do we prioritize other things above our relationship with god there's modern day idols all around us and what should we do we should tear them down we should smash them and break them down pulverize them to powder tear down the idols our entertainment can be another area of idolatry this can become an idol it's quite telling how you see sometimes you go into someone's home and they've got pretty much nothing but they've got the great big screen it's uh now nothing against having great big screens but for some it's almost like that becomes a an altar in some in some places again i'm not meaning to knock anyone here who's got a big screen it's nothing sinful about having a big screen but it's what you do what you're watching it's what you're putting in front of your eyes isn't it and that can consume can consume your life it can consume your time can consume your energy your attention your adoration because it's becoming an idol for you and of course there's many warnings about what we should put in front of our eyes psalm 101 verse 3 the psalmist says i'll set no wicked thing before mine eyes i hate the work of them that turn aside it shall not cleave to me make that decision not to set a wicked thing

before your eyes so being mindful what would the lord want to dominate my mind my thinking my time sometimes too we can elevate relationships or even ourselves above our lord our lord says luke 14 if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren sisters yea and his own life also he cannot be my disciple there's there's a telling thought here that of course he's not saying to hate all of those dear people in your life but he's saying in in correspondence with him that he is far far and way and above any other relationship that it doesn't mean we neglect our loved ones god forbid but that our love for god should be so supreme in comparison that our love for god should be so overarching overwhelming as the first and most consideration for all of life's choices we make so what are god's people to do about idols idolatry we should be recognizing them and forsaking them and we can make a bit of a self-assessment prayerfully think about what of my life are the things maybe that are taking my lord's rightful place other things that really i should question and confess these idols before the lord it says we should confess our sins if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness so you know prayerfully we can come before our lord and ask god lord show me what is taking your place so that i can remove it and replace it and take tangible steps to remove those idols from your life so we could think for example technology you could set limits on it you could have a digital detox they call it you could think about your financial priorities about how you're spending your time whether it's in prayer or in the word even your job can become an idol such that you're working a secular work without thinking to take a sabbath rest of choosing to use your time for god's work can we reorient our relationships so that we honor god sometimes you get those choices in life well there's a birthday party but church is on at the same time well if you go to the birthday party early and still come to the church time you know there's ways you can juggle things make a choice that you can be late for something that might be more of a secular thing because you want to place worship of your god as the first consideration about how you place the priorities of the use of your time because you want to honor god first and it's not that you don't value relationships it's just they have to fit around church and that can mean as well putting time aside for personal devotion before engaging in social activities that you put your devotion to god first and you want to cultivate those habits of prayer of of bible reading of fellowship that that is first that's the first consideration other things can fit around that we read in romans 12 verse 2 and be not conformed to this world but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind that you might prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of god we shouldn't be conformed we should be transformed and it's calling us to this heart to worship to worship him above all that the renewing of our minds should be such that our mind is focused on things above our affection is there that will examine our hearts and

[ 25 : 01 ] lives and identify what are those modern day idols in my life when we look at our calendar we look at our schedule we look at our time what we're putting it into thinking do i really put god in the first place in the highest place or are there idols there rather let's place god at the center and let other things fit around him in act 17 we read paul was preaching in athens and he noticed there was false gods everywhere athens is full of idols still julie and i had on a one trip of a lifetime that we talk about we spent a few days in athens and went to mars hill and we saw various idols various statues they're still there of all the false gods and they reckon there's 30 000 gods were in athens in that city 30 000 and we read when paul got there it says while paul waited for them at athens says of paul his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry he saw the city of athens

wholly given over to idol idol idolatry to idol worship and really it's the same today in our culture isn't it look at elizabeth look at adelaide look at our nation it's given over to idols it's just the gods are different today for us today idols are more than statues and shrines and images of false gods an idol is worshipping something other than the one true god when we go talking to folk at the door for some it's their god is there's no god their god is atheism the god of atheism no god at all they hate god you start talking to them about the gospel and i had one fellow yesterday and we had a bit of a robust engagement and i said well god bless you and he got really angry when i said that to him as lucky as uh he went red and steam coming out of his ears just about um when i said that and he said don't you say that to me said that through his clenched teeth virtually frothing at the mouth that's because they're serving another god and that god is the devil when they say i'm an atheist oh you're a devil worshiper then that's the that's what it means really isn't it because they're worshipping anything other than the true god is to be a worshiper of the devil ultimately people will make time for whatever their heart desires what are we substituting for god what's taking his place we can think of that as children of god as god's people today man crafts his own idols and we can do that as christians too exodus 24 it says thou shalt not make for yourself an idol really they don't accidentally appear we make them we make them whether conceived by our imagination our will our appetites whether formed by our hands and worship by our will it's what we make says don't make for yourself an idol people are making idols today aren't they it's where something other than our lord takes our occupation it occupies us if you want to determine what idols you're worshipping check the desires and affections of your heart is your heart inordinately connected to whatever it be possessions the screen business whatever it is that seems to be just it's consuming it's dangerous to worship the wrong god isn't it and there's so many things we could say i don't want to

come across as condemnatory but really just more as an exhortation to take stock take stock brother take stock sister and discern for yourself what it is that maybe there's something that's taken his space that he should have that space in romans 1 it talks about people exchanging the truth of god for a lie worshipping and serving other things other things created things rather than the creator and there's consequences for such false worship we see in romans 1 that there's a serious consequence of exchanging the truth of god for a lie there's consequences and paul elsewhere says that the worship of idols is basically the worship of devils in 1 corinthians 10 talks about the table of the lord the table of devils he's saying uh that the the gentiles sacrificed to devils and not to god i would not that you should have fellowship with devils i know i was listening to one preacher and he was saying really behind every image or idol there's a devil there's a demon because really it's a substitute isn't it you think not that we need to get you know overwhelmed with such a thought because really there's there's nothing in them there is no god in that statue of buddha or whatever it be but there is a demonic kind of influence there isn't there it's a demonic influence and and so and really and truly i know we would do well to consider just as an aside if you've got anything in your home that is of any origin like that even if it's a souvenir of a country you've been to you know i know i think as a younger man our family had a little little green kind of necklace thing had a buddha on it one had like a crucifix on it when we're a bit less discerning and we've got rid of that well and truly yet when i didn't have it but the family had it but you think such things we don't want anything like that if you've got any little statue of buddha or such a thing anything that is of a questionable origin you know there's various african items and artifacts or certain aboriginal artifacts and things like that we've got to be discerning and careful not saying all aboriginal art is a problem but you've got a question sometimes there's a there's a connection there and we want to be very careful about that we don't want to have such a thing if there's any question about that i mean some people say whether even garden gnomes are a bit of a questionable thing i mean basically any images if there's a question mark smash it up destroy it i know there was one time a friend of mine um um one of one of his children was given a a little santa a little santa and uh the minute the gift bearer had had left he smashed the santa up in front of his children because he didn't want any idols any idols now uh it's just an example of what whatever your convictions are if that's a substitute we should smash it up and get rid of it honestly yeah honestly i think it's probably the right thing to do is to smash some such things up because it's a substitute for god i don't mean to be extreme here but if you're so convicted better to get rid of it than to have any question of conscience because idol worship is clearly wrong it tells us here in leviticus 26 you shall make you no idols nor graven image neither rear you up a standing image neither shall you set up any image or stone in your land to bow down onto it for i am the lord your god of course we know ultimately the

beast is going to have his image that's that's the kind of where it's going to go to isn't it when we're gone but idols are images and false gods it's an abomination it's called an abomination it's a deception of foolishness and we think of it even in secular families materialism becomes their god such they they value their possessions more than spiritual growth they they're all consumed with making money with getting more and more wealth and it's easy to get attached to the things that you own like your car clothes gadgets god calls covetousness an idol as we see here it tells how we should mortify put to death those things upon the earth it talks about fornication uncleanness inordinate affection evil concupiscences and covetousness which is idolatry so it's listed there with all kinds of filthy immoral things covetousness is idolatry when you think about it when you covet something it's like it's consuming you you want it and you want to you know put everything of your energy and time of your expending to get it to acquire it when you covet something or someone you're placing that object or person in a higher place than god giving it more importance than god you're worshipping it in a way giving your full devotion to it and so covetousness this means greed it means hankering after things this greedy grasping this chasing after things it's having an appetite for something else something other than god covetousness is idolatry think of it some will worship the god of drugs of pleasure hobbies pursuits sporting events and entertainment such that that fills their calendar and then they might find some little space for god in what scarce time they've got left now there's nothing wrong with enjoying activities and entertainment and recreation but when we make that the focus that can be an idol when we place so much importance on sports and entertainment it can lead to this taking away of our energy and our faith suffers for that what are we giving our time and energy to i'm not wanting to leave you with any condemnation here tonight but more just to pose the question think of it little children keep yourselves from idols what is it i can do to nurture my relationship with god to deepen my relationship with my lord to strive to honor to please him to set him as the highest consideration that he would have the highest place to put godly pursuits and time with him and his word with his people as that priority that my relationship with the lord is above all earthly things let's keep a watchful eye over our heart is something becoming an idol in my life that i'm not willing to crucify the flesh and die to self is my relationship with god such that other things potential idols are taking his place and it's hurting my faith my spiritual growth god has been displaced from the center of my life because of these other things the cares of these other things the cares of this world the modern idols that turn away our love from him rather let's think how can i be more pleasing my god to break those idols those thoughts that mindset to have that transformation rather than the confirmation to lean on him and know that self-control that discipline of a godly life and resist that temptation when we see the temptation to idolize worldly things we'll say no i want to put god as the highest place other things can fit underneath him he's got to have the highest place and he is at the center of my life friends let that be your prayer tonight i pray that false gods will be replaced with the one true god it's the theme right through the word of god we see it's a choice isn't it are you going to serve the other the the gods of the amorites and all the other rights or are you going to serve the one true god are you going to step over the line and know god and of course for salvation we know when we trust christ we have everlasting life we have salvation as his gift and then we ought to bless god with our life and live for his pleasure let's all children keep yourselves from idols our lord says you shall have no other gods no other gods before me let us pray lord we thank you that you are the one your name is higher than every other name and lord we thank you one day every knee shall bow and confess that you are lord to the glory of god the father lord we pray help us in the meantime not to bow down to idols but to bow down to you our living savior lord to love you more to honor you to value you above all else lord help us to see you're a jealous god you don't want us to be having any other affection that gets in the way lord help us to have a deeper love for you in jesus name we pray amen