Why We Love Idols

(by Jason Cheney)

***“For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse. For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.”*** ([**Romans 1:18-23**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Romans%201.18-23))

Maybe you’re like me and wonder, *“Why have humans always been prone to idolatry?”* Is there some kind of evidence that persuaded them their idol could help? We have witnesses who saw Jesus heal leprosy and raise the dead, and raise Himself from the dead. Were there ever witnesses who claimed to have seen the ancient god Baal? Were there ever miracles done by the idol goddess Asherah?

The Bible’s explanation for our attraction to idolatry is surprising. These idols are followed not because of what people believe but because of their attitude. And the scriptures also makes clear that Christians today are just as vulnerable to idolatry as our ancestors. Given our own sinfulness and attitude problems, we might have had the same struggles with idolatry had we been raised in ancient Poland or modern India.

**Who Is Vulnerable To Idolatry?**

Idolatry appeals to people who are ungrateful or unimpressed by God ([**Romans 1:18-21**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Romans%201.18-21)). Find someone who is unhappy with God’s government, and you’ve found someone who is vulnerable to idolatry. Maybe they’re angry at God: *“How could You do this? How could You take that sweet child from that family? How could You allow that?"* The death of my wife's father did not bring honor to God by many of his family and friends.

The more I think about this passage, the more it makes sense to me, especially in view of so-called atheists. There’s an old joke about atheism that conveys truth. It says there are two tenets of atheism. First, athiests believe there is no God. And second, they hate Him. That's what happens to us. We get angry enough at God that we go find our answers somewhere else.

Maybe some people just think they can do better than God. I went to the dentist years ago and got into a discussion with him about laser eye therapy. He told me, *“God did a good job on the eye, but not perfect.”* I guess he thinks he could have done better.

Perhaps some are just disgusted by God and the way He works. Many Jews were when they met Jesus ([**1 Corinthians 1:22**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Corinthians%201.22)). He was weak, homely, and submissive. Many people don't want to follow that kind of God. It’s disgusting to some people that God opposes homosexuality, advocates submission for wives and allows disease and death. It's unbelievable that He has killed people for lying. They know God is real. They just don’t like Him, respect Him or appreciate Him.

But is this really a problem amongst Christians? The apostle John wrote that it is. In the last chapter of his first epistle, John concluded that Christians must guard themselves from idols. Why do we need that admonition? Because we have attitude problems also. Idolatry is appealing to us when we dishonor God, distance ourselves from Him and dislike Him. Idolatry is an attitude. And we’re as vulnerable as anyone else when we become ungrateful, discontent and unimpressed.

**How do we combat the temptation of idolatry?**

***1. By watching our attitude,*** [***Romans 1:21***](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Romans%201.21)***.*** Brothers and sisters, let's be thankful. We are blessed. Even the bad things are good for us and help us become something special in God's eyes.

***2. By honoring God,*** [***Romans 1:21***](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Romans%201.21)***.***No one is more loving, no one is more compassionate, wise, and fair, and no one is more worthy. He knows what He’s doing!

***3. By not buying into vain forms of happiness,*** [***Romans 1:23***](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Romans%201.23)***.*** What makes you happy? Just be careful there. All forms of happiness on this earth are vanity ([**James 1:17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/James%201.17)). They won’t work. Go to God. Put your trust back in Him. He knows how to help. He wants to and will be your answer.

But if we lose faith in Him, He’ll surrender us to the idols. The expression *“gave them over”* from **Romans 1** literally means *"To concede, yield up, surrender."* If you want to leave Him, He’ll let you go. But if you want to find Him, He’ll show you the way ([1 Chronicles 28:9](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Chronicles%2028.9)).