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LITTLE CHILDREN KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” 1 John 5:21

This is the final instruction that John gives to us in his first letter. Why does John address ***“little children”*** in this final instruction? He is speaking to little children in the faith, spiritual children, to warn and charge them to take heed to themselves that they have no association with idols. Can you say Amen to this in your own life?

What is an idol?

Many images can come to mind when we ask about what an idol is, but we need to gain our understanding of idols from the word of God. In Stephen’s account of the fathers of faith, he brings to light the outcome of the children of Israel when they ***“would not obey”*** Moses. They rejected Moses, the one who spoke the ***“living oracles of God”*** to them (Acts 7:38-39). Stephen spoke of how they asked for other gods to be made for them in order that they might serve them. He spoke of how they grew impatient waiting for Moses to return from the Mountain. What was the result of them rejecting God’s messenger? They made an idol, ***“And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands”*** Acts 7:41. **An idol is the work of man’s hands.**

Apostle Paul talks about idols

“What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is sacrificed to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.” 1 Cor.10:19-20. From this we understand that an idol is not just something we can see, but rather, it is what is behind the idol that is something: demons. Worshiping idols brings us into fellowship with demons. We need to switch our minds from simply looking at an idol in the natural and discern the spiritual reality behind it. We are to keep ourselves from idols and not fellowship with demons.

You become like what you worship

In Psalm 135:15-18 there is a greater depth to understanding the effect idols can have. Again the Scriptures declare that idols are ***“the work of men’s hands”***. Idols cannot speak, see, or hear and it is very sobering to realise that ***“those who make them are like them, so is everyone who trusts in them”*** (v.18). Again we are not to look simply at the natural, physical idol, but the spiritual reality. We are to look at the demonic effect from what is behind the idol. Those who make idols, and those who put their trust in idols will be spiritually silenced, ***“having mouths but do not speak”***, spiritually blinded ***“eyes they have, but they do not see”***, and spiritually deafened ***“they have ears, but they do not hear”***.

Jeremiah’s description of an idol

The final description of an idol that we will look at is revealed in Jeremiah 10:8 ***“A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine.”*** Idols have to do with doctrine! What will trusting in a worthless doctrine, a vain and empty teaching cause? Spiritual silence, blindness and deafness. The church needs to be aware of the many idols, which are worthless doctrines, that have crept in. These have been ***“the works of men’s hands”***, causing the church to be silenced of its authority, blinded to God’s true vision for these last days and deafened to hear the voice of God and the pure word He is revealing.

Why did John warn “little children”?

In **Ephesians 4:14** it reads, *“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”*. It is only children, immature ones, who are swayed and taken off course by worthless doctrines. These doctrines are the works of men’s hands that have been crafted together. God’s children need to grow up, so we are *“no longer”* unstable and easily misled by these false teachings. The Greek word for *‘wind’* is literally *‘spirit’*. So it could read as, *‘with every spirit of doctrine’*. This again reveals the demonic effect of false doctrines to silence, blind and deafen the immature church. Church, it is time for you to no longer be children, to no longer be silenced, blinded and deafened by the trickery of men.

How do we grow up?

It is basic nature for children to grow up if they are being nourished and cared for. It is the same spiritually. The word says that, *“as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”* **1 Peter 2:2**. It is the pure word of God that gives growth! What are you feeding on? When the word of God is rejected and God’s children turn aside to other winds of doctrine, or are being carried about with motivational messages, their growth will be hindered.

The three stages of growth

There are three stages of spiritual growth identified in **1 John 2:12-14**. They are termed as *“little children”*, *“young men”* and *“fathers”*. Little children have come to know God as their Father and that their sins have been forgiven. They are then able to grow up into young men. Young men have become strong because *“the word of God abides in them and they have overcome the wicked one”*. They are no longer simply being spoon fed the word, but the word now lives in them and they walk in it, finding increasing victories over the wicked one, the father of lies (**John 8:44**). Young men grow up into being fathers, who know God and are able to father, nurture and raise spiritual children and this cycle is to continue. What made the young men strong and no longer children? **The word of God! It is the pure Word of God that causes growth!**

How do we keep ourselves from idols?

Psalms 78 begins with *“Give ear!”* We are to listen. *“For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children”* **Ps. 78:5**. Fathers need to teach the little children! Fathers are to make known the established testimony and word of God to the younger generation that they may keep themselves from idols. This passage continues with outcomes for the children being taught. It is that they might:

- Know the word of God (v.5)
- Arise and declare the word to their children (v.6)
- Set their hope in God (v.7)
- Not forget the works of God (v.7)
- Keep His commandments (v.7)
- *“That they may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation”* v.8.

Jesus also commissioned His apostles in the same manner to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe everything He had commanded them (**Matt.28:18-20**). The results of fathering the little children are astounding. I have even heard this passage called an *‘antidote for rebellion’*. However, there has been a vacuum of fathers in the church and so much trickery and craftiness of men has prohibited the growth of God’s children.

God forsakes those who are given to idols

As you follow through **Psalm 78** we see God's response to His people turning away to idols, "*So that He forsook the tabernacle at Shiloh, the tent He had placed among men and delivered His strength into captivity and His glory into the enemy's hand*" v.56-61. What fellowship does the temple of God have with idols? Because the people set up idols, God had to remove His dwelling from among them. God will not dwell with idols! But God had an answer for us.

Jesus has given gifts to help us

God was manifested in the flesh. He came to forever establish His dwelling amongst men by reconciling the world to Himself through the cross. When Jesus breathed those awesome words "*It is finished*", He accomplished more than the forgiveness of sins. In **Ephesians 4:8** the fulfilment of **Psalm 68:18** is revealed, "*When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.*" What are these gifts that were given from His ascension? "*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers*" v.11. These ministries are given as Christ's own gift to function in His Body today.

The gifts are for the equipping and preparing of the saints, to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ "*till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that WE SHOULD NO LONGER BE CHILDREN*" **Ephesians 4:12-14**. Jesus is restoring these five gifts to the church, to grow the church and to bring the church to maturity. These ministries are given "*till*" we all come to the unity of the faith, which means, believing the same Truth. These ministries are given to be "*speaking the truth in love, that we may grow up in all things into Him who is the head- Christ*" v.15. These are the days of restoration of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in the church!

The Word lets us go on to maturity

If we only partake of the milk of the word we are like babes who are not receiving solid food to give us the nutrients we need to grow. **Hebrews 5:13-14** reveals that the word enables our senses to be exercised to discern both good and evil, truth and worthless doctrines. Our senses are what causes us to judge rightly. We need to be receiving the solid food of God's word to have our senses strengthened to discern the Truth and no longer have our senses silenced, blinded and deafened by every spirit of doctrine.

'He who has ears to hear, let Him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!'

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers of Jesus Christ are to speak the pure word and teach no other doctrine, that the children may know the word of God and keep His commandments (**1 Tim.1:3** and **Ps. 78:5-7**). **These are the days of God restoring to us His pure Word through the ministries that He has ordained!**

The apostles' doctrine

The first church grew, disciples were multiplied and released to function in their callings and gifts. The word of God grew mightily (**Acts 6:7**). Why is this rare today? What were they being fed? "*They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine...*" **Acts 2:42**.

In apostle Peter's second letter he declares "*we did not follow cunningly devised fables*" but had "*the prophetic word confirmed*" (prophetic Scriptures), when they made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (**2 Pet.1:16,19**). His letter exposed the false teachings and prophecies concerning the Lord's return and in it he exhorts the readers to "*be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the*

commandment of us, the apostles” 2 Peter 3:2. He even goes on to say that he equated writings of apostle Paul as Scripture (v.15-16). The apostles gave us the pure Word and we are to keep it.

The written word is the Truth that will empower God’s church to judge between true and false doctrine. Peter goes on to explain that in the epistles there are **“some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction as they do also the rest of the scriptures” 2Peter 3:16.** This should not be surprising as even the devil twisted the written word when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. But how did Jesus overcome the wicked one? He could say, **“It is written!” (Matt. 4:1-11)**

Growth is in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ

We are to **“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” 2Peter 3:18.** It is through the wisdom given to us through both Old and New Testament Scriptures and by receiving the appointment of apostles, prophets and teachers in the church (1Cor.12:28) that we will grow both in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Idols will be exposed and uprooted from the church as these gifts are restored to speak the Truth.

Receive the ministry gifts as leaders in the church

In **Hebrews** we are instructed to remember and obey those who rule over us (Heb.13:7a,17a). These are the ones who have **“spoken the word of God to us, whose faith follow” Hebrews 13:7.** It is emphasised **“Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace...” Hebrews 13:9.**

Even as the children of Israel grew impatient of Moses returning from the Mountain and sought after idols, so too can we become impatient children wanting to grow up and do the ‘real stuff’ without being properly disciplined and trained. This can cause us to seek after various teachings and “prophecies” from every which way, not realising this hinders our growth and can cause the spiritual silence, blindness and deafness spoken of earlier.

Little children, it is good that the heart be established by grace. **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” Hebrews 13:8.** The doctrine never changes and it is all about Him! No longer be tossed to and fro and carried about, but receive these ministers God has given to bring us to the unity of the faith, to the fullness of Christ.

The Promise

Little children, we are to keep ourselves from idols. If you have questioned why you have not grown spiritually or you identify with not speaking, seeing or hearing the Truth, it is time to repent and decide to grow up. God has given a promise to all who will forsake their trust in idols, these worthless doctrines, and separate themselves to grow up hearing under their Father’s word.

“What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them, I will be their God and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says YHWH Almighty” 2Corinthians 6:16-18.

God will dwell among you

If you have been hearing the Holy Spirit’s conviction because you realise you have been trusting in some “strange” doctrines, it is time to come out from among them. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit and God is cleansing His temple from all idols that **“He may dwell in them and walk among them.”** Repent of touching what is unclean and God promises to receive you. YHWH Almighty promises to be your Father and receive you as His

son or daughter. If you have rejected the belief of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers in the church today, repent and ask Jesus to bring you into the fellowship of the Church He is building. The following verse in **2 Corinthians 7:1** says, ***“Therefore, having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”***

Beloved, seek the Lord Jesus now and ask Him to expose all idols in your flesh and in your spirit. He who called you is faithful and will also do it. Amen!

Elizabeth Maunder