

WHAT HAVE I TO DO WITH IDOLS?

Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843)

“What have I to do any more with idols?”

—Hosea 14:8

When Christ came into the temple, He found those that sold “oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple” (Joh 2:14, 15). So when the Holy Spirit comes into any heart, He drives out the buyers and sellers. If you have received the Spirit, you will be crying now in your heart, Lord, take these things hence; drive them out of my heart. What have I to do any more with idols? Some of the idols to be cast away are:

1. *Self-righteousness.* This is the largest idol of the human heart, the idol which man loves most and God hates most. Dearly beloved, you will always be going back to this idol. You are always trying to be something in yourself, to gain God’s favor by thinking little of your sin; or by looking to your repentance, tears, prayers; or by looking to your religious exercises, your feelings; or by looking to your graces—the Spirit’s work in your heart. Beware of false Christs. Study sanctification to the utmost, but make not a Christ of it.

God hates this idol more than all others, because it comes in the place of Christ: it sits on Christ's throne. Just as the worship of the virgin Mary is the worst of all kinds of idolatry, because it puts her in the place of Christ; so self-righteousness is the idol God hates most, for it sits on the throne of Christ. Dash it down, dear friends. Let it never appear again.

It is like Manasseh's carved image in the Holiest of all (2Ch 33:1-15). When Manasseh came home an altered man to Jerusalem, would not his first visit be to the Holiest of all? With eager hand he would draw the veil aside; and when he found the carved image, he would dash it down from the throne of God. *Go and do likewise.* If you feel God's love freely by the righteousness without works, then why would you go back to this grim idol? *What have I to do any more with idols?*

2. Darling sins. Every man has his darling sins. Long they kept you from the Lord Jesus. You have this day declared that you were willing to leave them all for Christ. Go home then, and perform your vows. After Hezekiah's Passover, when they had enjoyed much of the love and Spirit of God, "all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all" (2Ch 31:1). You might have seen them entering the shady groves and dashing down the carved images. *Go you and do likewise.*

Dash down family idols, unholy practices that have spread through your family. Dash down secret idols in your own heart. Leave not one. Remember, one Achan in the camp troubled Israel, and they were smitten before their enemies (see Jos 7:1-26). So, one idol left in your heart may trouble you. Let Achan be slain if you would go on your way rejoicing. *What have I to do any more with idols?* "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off" (Mat 5:30).

3. Unlawful attachments. There is not a more fruitful source of sin and misery than unlawful attachments. How much of the poetry and music of our country are given over to the worship of the idols of a foolish heart! How many are given over to worship a piece of clay that will soon be eaten of worms! Oh, my friends, have you felt the love of God? Do you feel the sweet, full beams of His grace shining down upon your soul? Have you received the dew of His Spirit? How can you, then, any more love a creature that is void of the grace of God? What have you to do any more with idols?

Dear young persons, abhor the idea of marriage with the unconverted. Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Marry only in the Lord. Remember, if it be otherwise, it is a forbidden marriage. But may there not be a lawful attachment? I believe there may; but take heed it be not an idol. I believe they are happiest who are living only for eternity, who have no object in this world to divert their hearts from Christ. "The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none" (1Co 7:29). *What have I to do any more with idols?*

4. Ministers. You have good reason to love ministers and to esteem them highly for their work's sake. They love you: they watch for your souls as they that must give an account; they bear you on their hearts; they travail in birth till Christ be formed in you; they spend and are spent for you; they often endure amazing temptations, agonies, wrestling for your sake.

Some have been your spiritual fathers. This is a holy tie that will never be broken. You have good reason to love your spiritual father. You may have ten thousand instructors in Christ, but ah, make not an idol of them. The people that would have worshipped Paul were the very people that stoned him and left him for dead (Act 14:18, 19). Oh, I wish that this day may bring you so near to Christ, and so much under the love of God and the dew of Israel that you shall no more glory in man! *What have I to do any more with idols?*

5. *Earthly pleasures.* This is a smiling, dazzling idol that has ten thousand worshipers—lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God (2Ti 3:4). What have you to do any more with this idol? Sometimes it is a gross idol. The theater is one of its temples—there it sits enthroned. The tavern is another, where its reeling, staggering votaries sing its praise. What have you to do with these? Have you the love of God in your soul—the Spirit of God in you? How dare you cross the threshold of a theater or a tavern any more! What! The Spirit of God amid the wanton songs of a theater or the boisterous merriment of a tavern? Shame on such practical blasphemy! No; leave them, dear friends, to be cages of devils and of every unclean and hateful bird. You must never cross their threshold any more.

If you feel the love of God and the Spirit, you will not lightly sin these joys away amid the vain anxieties of cards or the rattling of senseless dice. What shall I say of simpering tea parties, the pleasures of religious gossiping, and useless calls, without meaning, sincerity, or end? I will only say, they are the happiest of God's children who have neither time nor heart for these things. I believe there cannot be much of the Spirit where there is much of these. What shall I say of dress? A young believer, full of faith and joy, was offered a present of flowers for her hair. She would not take them. She was pressed to accept them; still she refused. Why will you not? Ah, she said, how can I wear roses on my brow, when Christ wore thorns on His? The joy of being in Christ is so sweet, that it makes all other joys insipid, dull, lifeless. In His right hand are riches and honors; in His left are length of days. His ways are ways of pleasantness. *What, then, have I to do any more with idols?*

6. *Money.* Dear souls, if you have felt the love of God, the dew, you must dash down this idol. You must not love money. You must be more openhearted, more openhanded, to the poor. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord" (Pro 19:17). "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Mat 25:40).

You must build more churches. God be praised for what has been done; but you must do far more. I have as many in this parish who go nowhere, as would fill another church. You must give more to missions, to send the knowledge of Jesus to the Jews and to the Gentile world. Oh, how can you grasp your money in hand so greedily, while there are hundreds of millions perishing? You that give tens must give your hundreds. You that are poor must do what you can. Remember Mary (Mar 14:8) and the widow's mite (Mar 12:43). Let us resolve to give the tenth of all we have to God (Deu 14:23). God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2Co 9:8).

7. *Fear of man.* Grim idol, bloody-mouthed, many souls he has devoured and trampled down into hell! His eyes are full of hatred to Christ's disciples. Scoffs and jeers lurk in his eye. The laugh of the scorner growls in his throat. Cast down this idol. This keeps some of you from secret prayer, from worshipping God in your family, from going to lay your case before ministers, from openly confessing Christ. You that have felt God's love and Spirit, dash this idol to pieces. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die? (Isa 51:12). Fear not, thou worm Jacob (Isa 41:14). *What have I to do any more with idols?*

Dearly beloved and longed for, my heart's desire for you is to see you a holy people. How much longer my ministry may be continued among you, God only knows. But if God give me health and grace among you, I here willingly devote my all to Him. No moment, no pleasure, no ease, no wealth, do I wish for myself. I feel that He has bought me, and I am His property. Oh come, give yourselves to the Lord with me! Bind yourself to the horns of God's altar. Time past is enough to have been the devil's, the world's, our own. Now let us be Christ's alone. Are you willing? Lord, bear witness; seal it in heaven; write it in Thy book. Bear witness angels, devils, scowling world; bear witness, sun and moon; bear witness, stones and

timber; bear witness, Jesus, Lamb of God! We are thine now and thine forever. *What have we to do any more with idols?*

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