



“I shall always be ready to remind you of these things...”
2 Peter 1:21



CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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When We Meet

Sunday

Bible Classes – 9:00 am
Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

Our Elders

R.D. Hopper
Norman Kemper

Our Deacons

Troy Hunter
Kelly Kendall
Tony Ramick

Our Preacher

Alex Hale

Idolatry Then... and Now

By Alex Hale

The second command (Exodus 20:4-6) sounds a lot like the first (Exodus 20:1-3). It could be argued that they lock together like matching pieces of a puzzle. The first commandment tells us who God is. The second commandment tells us how we are to worship Him. This law tells God's people that the object of our worship should never be something of our own construction or something that is under our control – only God is to have that place in our lives.

This does not mean that religious symbols are sinful (see Exodus 31:4-5). The art in the tabernacle was symbolic. The cross serves as a symbol of our Christian faith. The bread and fruit of the vine are symbols of the sacrifice of Jesus. Symbols are not inherently bad. The problem comes in when people begin to worship the art or the symbol instead of God Himself.

This is what Paul writes about in Romans 1:23-25. As you may know, the people of Israel continually displayed this tendency in Old Testament times. At the very moment Moses was on the mountain with God receiving the law, the people were making a golden calf (Exodus 32:4). Even the bronze serpent that God provided in the wilderness to deliver the people from snake bites was later made into an object of worship. Later, following the idolatrous practices of other countries, King Jeroboam set up golden calves in the cities of Dan and Bethel.

However, the Jews were not the only ones with this tendency. In the book of Acts, Paul was amazed by the “*many gods*” that filled the city of Athens. Idolatry continues in our world even to this day. A story is told about a tribe that lives in central Papua New Guinea and these people like big ears a lot. In fact, this tribe worshiped former President Lyndon Johnson because he had big ears. The people of this tribe has a famous photo of President Johnson pulling on the big ears of his beagles. They hung these photos up and offered flowers to it.

We hear stories like this and we think that idolatry is all about worshiping weird things like big ears and golden cows, and since we do not do that, this law is not relevant to us anymore. The reality, however, is that idolatry in our culture is very widespread. It is just more subtle. For example, in our culture we worship the gods of materialism, sexual indulgence, and personal power. We may put faith in celebrities, “worshiping” them as we look to them for guidance in life on everything from health to sexuality to politics. I believe the most-worshiped false god in our society is self. Books centered on self make millions. Laura Schlessinger has written, “One could read the Second Commandment as follows: ‘Do not make your SELF an idol.’” However, many times that is what we do. We idolize our individual feelings, basing major decisions in life on how we feel rather than on what God says. We worship happiness and self-esteem at all costs. We care more about personal rights than God-given responsibilities. We often worship how we look. We often bow down to our careers. We must understand that whenever any of these things or people – when anything other than God – becomes the absolute focus of our attentions and activities, that is idolatry. Nothing in our lives should make God take a backseat.