



Articles and Sermons :: A Heart Without Idols - Francis Frangipane

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A Heart Without Idols
by Francis Frangipane

When we first come to Jesus, He accepts us just as we are: problems, sins and all. As our needs are met, however, we gradually discover that God is seeking something from our lives. What He seeks is our worship. But true worship is the consequence, the result, of seeing God as He is. It springs naturally from a soul purified by love; it rises like incense from a heart without idols.

The God Whose Name is Jealous

Christ does not personally destroy the idols of sin and self within us. Rather, He points to them and tells us to destroy them. This message is about repentance. If you withdraw from the sound of that word, it is because you need a fresh cleansing of your soul. In fact, we are talking about a type of repentance that is uncommon to those who only seek forgiveness but not change. We are speaking of deep repentance—a vigilant, contrite attitude that refuses to allow sin or self to become an idol in our hearts.

In Exodus we see Christ's view of idols. He warns,

Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, lest it become a snare in your midst. But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim—for you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

—Exodus 34:12–14

There are many aspects to the nature of Christ. He is the Good Shepherd, our Deliverer and our Healer. We perceive God through the filter of our need of Him. And thus He has ordained, for He Himself is our one answer to a thousand needs.

But how does Jesus see us? Looking through His eyes, the church is His bride: bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh (Ephesians 5:22–32). He has not saved us so we can live for ourselves again; He has saved us for Himself (Colossians 1:16). True salvation is a betrothal. He purifies us for our marriage. From His perspective, our independent ways are idolatrous. They kindle the fires of His jealousy.

An idol is not an occasional sin; it is something that rules us and makes us its slave. For some, fear is an idol; for others it is lust; for still others it is rebellion or pride. Whatever challenges Jesus' right to our hearts becomes His enemy, which He will confront. Because of His jealousy toward us as His bride, in regard to these false gods, the Lord demands we destroy these idols ourselves.

From the above Scriptures we see that Jesus does not want us to "carefully" take down that hidden altar of sin so we will not break it; rather He commands that we "tear down" what is offensive. He is not politely asking us to dismantle, bolt-by-bolt, our pillars of pride; instead, He demands that we "smash" them to pieces. When He shows us an inner idol, we must demolish it completely. We cannot secretly harbor the slightest intention of ever using that idol again. It must be destroyed.

You may feel you are not worshiping any idols. You do not stand, morning by morning, before a statue of Baal and praise it as your god. Indeed, we do not worship the idols of the ancient heathen. Like everything in our modern world, man has sophisticated idolatry as well. Paul talks of the antichrist who will appear in the last days as that one "who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Where is the temple of God on earth—is it a building? Perhaps, but in no other place in Paul's teaching does he refer to the temple of God as anything other than the church. Yet, even if Paul is referring to a man seated as a god in Jerusalem, somewhere in that man's life he had to first think of himself as "being God."

Let us perceive the antichrist as did the apostle John, who saw it not only as one who was coming but also as a spiritual enemy that sought to infiltrate and then replace true Christianity (1 John 2:18; 4:3). The antichrist spirit is a religious spirit; it is manifested in that thinking which refuses to be taught and corrected by Christ or anyone else. The spirit of antichrist is resident in much of the church today, opposing the move of God, displaying itself as being God.

Simply put, the spirit of antichrist is that spirit which exalts self as deity. You see, the spirit of antichrist is much more subtle than someone suddenly announcing to the world he is the Creator. Again, our world is far too sophisticated for that. For us today, we must look for the influence of antichrist in our religious traditions: are those traditions founded upon Scripture or upon man? And then, beyond our traditions, in the immediacy of our own hearts, we must discern the disposition of the antichrist spirit in the thought structure of our flesh nature. Is there something in your soul which opposes and exalts itself above God, taking its seat in the human temple of God, displaying itself as being God? The resistance in you against God is an idol. It is the most powerful idol in the human heart.

But the false god of self-rule does not stand alone in man. The ancient god Mercury would be hard pressed to keep pace with today's gods of Anxiety and Haste. The world has taken its bloodlust out of the ancient Roman arenas and put it into violent movies. They have taken the goddesses of fertility from the Greek hillsides only to idolize sex in our theaters and televisions. What mankind has done is move the pagan temples from the high places of the countryside to the hidden places of the human heart.

If we exalt money, status or sex above the Word of God, we are living in idolatry. Every time we inwardly submit to the strongholds of fear, bitterness and pride, we are bowing to the rulers of darkness. Each of these idols must be smashed, splintered and obliterated from the landscape of our hearts.

"I am a Jealous God"

"You shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God!" (Exodus 34:14) The Lord did not say He was, at times, jealous; He said His name, which reveals His nature, is Jealous. Right next to His name "I Am" is His name "Jealous." His love is not some ethereal principle of "higher cosmic consciousness." His love is focused upon us, actually jealous for us as individuals. He "calls his own sheep by name" (John 10:3). Jesus knows your name. He loves you personally. The fact that Christ is jealous for us as individuals, caring and providing for each aspect of our lives, and that He suffered humiliation and death on the cross to pay for our sins, demonstrates how great a love it is with which He loves us. He gave all. He deserves all.

His jealousy for us is perfect. It is not the same as human jealousy: petty, possessive and insecure. He is not sitting in Heaven wringing His hands, wondering what we really think of Him. His jealousy is based upon His pure love for us and His desire to bless us and fulfill our lives in Him. He understands us, yet knowing our weaknesses, He still "jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us" (James 4:5). His promise to us is faithful: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5 KJV). He refuses to stop loving us. You may think of yourself as a sinner, as unlovable—as though no one wants you, but Jesus desires you.

Early in my ministry, upon occasion I gave up on certain individuals, people who seemed to me hopelessly unreceptive to God. As the years passed, I would later discover these same individuals were now walking with God. Jesus is faithful. He loves you with a love that is jealous for you as a person.

God knows, however, that in order for you to experience His love, the idols of self and sin must be destroyed. And to prove our intentions and love for Him, He tells us to smash these idols. Would you be holy? Then remove the idols of self and sin from within you. For holiness exists in a soul purified by love; it exudes like incense from a heart without idols.

Taken from Holiness, Truth, and the Presence of God by Francis Frangipane