

THE DANGER OF A "HARMLESS" SOUVENIR

Have you ever wondered why God told Israel; "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."? (Exo.20:3) There is far more at stake than just the idea that God only is to be worshipped. Man is an incurable worshipper. He was made in the image of God, and therefore by design, man was made to worship God only. Rom. 1:23 teaches us that if we fail to worship the true God, we will fashion a god of our own imagination and worship it - the creature, more than the Creator! God is so concerned about worshipping Him, that He even instructed Israel; "...and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth." (Exo.23:13) God doesn't even want us to talk about other deities, that's how serious a matter it is.

God further instructed Israel in Exodus 34, that when they came into the promised land, they were to break down the pagan altars, and destroy their gods. Note God's purpose for this instruction...so that Israel would not go to worshipping them instead of Jehovah, and be drawn away from Him.

I Corinthians 10 adds even another dimension. The Corinthians were partaking at pagan altars to pagan deities, and then would come to the assembly of saints, and worship there. Paul came down very hard with them instructing that to partake at the altar of a pagan god was to actually partake at the altar of Satan! Therefore God also had the PROTECTION of His people in mind - protection from the power of Satan which can reside in an idol. This principle was forcefully driven home to a pastor recently.

A pastor and his wife were given a vacation in a rented condominium. Upon awaking the very first morning there, the pastor was having his quiet time with God. A battle began to rage! He began having a flood of sensual thoughts that were in conflict with his purpose of meeting with God. The man tried to pray and ask God for their removal. Alas, the prayers seemed to be ineffective. The man tried reviewing Scripture he had memorized, and this failed to clear away the disturbing thought pattern. In desperation the man tried to think back to some unconfessed sin which may have needed attention, but even this proved ineffective.

As the Pastor sat there in the quiet of that condominium, he began to sense that maybe the place needed cleansing from whatever had taken place there in the past. So again, prayer was made, asking the Lord to cleanse the building by the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son. The distracting thought pattern persisted.

About this time, the Lord seemed to impress the pastor with the idea that maybe there was some object in the room through which Satan was able to exert some evil influence. Again he prayed and asked God to direct him to whatever object might be the source of the trouble.

As he continued to sit there reflecting on this unique problem, he began to look around the room, when all of a sudden, his attention was directed to a small black statue - handcarved, - the kind you would pick up in a novelty store. It sat harmlessly on the top shelf of a bookcase, about 5 inches high. The man cautiously went over and picked it up and turned it around. To his utter amazement was a little sticker on the back which read; "THE GOD OF SUCCESS". Then there followed a little prayer which one was to pray if one needed success in business or whatever.

The man called to his wife in the other room, and showing her the idol, related the problem which he had just been experiencing. Reminding her that this was not their apartment, and that the idol was not theirs

to dispose of, he asked her what they should do? Pausing to think the matter through, she finally suggested they put the idol face down in an unused closet, as far back as possible so as not to give it any honour. Then she recommended they pray and ask God to break whatever Satanic power may be attached to it for the duration of their stay there.

The pastor did with the idol as his wife had suggested. They then prayed that the Lord would indeed break Satan's influence there through that "harmless" little novelty idol. God did indeed hear their prayer, and the barrage of sensual thoughts disappeared, and they finished out there vacation without further incident.

There is a most interesting sidelight to the story. The condominium is owned by one of the pastor's church people who had graciously offered it to the pastoral couple for a much needed rest. When the pastor and his wife returned, one of the first things they did was contact the owners of the condominium. Their contact went something like this: The Pastor said, "You'll never guess what we experienced at your condominium!" To which the owner replied; "Don't tell me, let me guess...was it something related to that little black idol on the bookshelf?" The pastor was utterly amazed that he should think that. Well, the incident was related to the owner of the building. He responded that the idol had been received at a Christmas party where all were to exchange \$2.00 gifts. This "harmless" idol had been a gift to them. He admitted he had felt uncomfortable for some time about it, and had planned to destroy it upon his next trip. The idol was ultimately destroyed!

This illustrates why God never wanted His people make idols, to get them from others, or even to speak their name. Satan's power can very definitely be attached to them. Remember, Satan will rob the Christian of his victory and power any way he can. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." -2 Cor. 7:1 Let us be motivated to cleanse our homes of all that Satan would use to make our lives powerless, and victory-less!

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