

Galatians 4:8-11 — The Non-Gods

Warm-Up Question:

What things in life demand most of your attention and energy and money?

READ: Galatians 4:8-11

I. NON-GODS: DEFINED

- ▶ Vs. 8-9 indicates that every “elementary” or basic thing of the world can be turned into “weak and worthless” “gods,” or idols, that can enslave us. Read the quotes in the sidebar and come up with an understandable definition of an idol.
- ▶ What were the “weak and “worthless” things that were enslaving the Galatians before they were Christians (v. 8)? What is enslaving them now (v. 9-10, 3:3)?

II. NON-GODS: ENSLAVEMENT

- ▶ From the quotes you read and your definition of an idol, discuss how we can make idols out of: 1) worldly/sinful things, 2) good things, 3) religious things.
- ▶ Name 1-2 possible idols in your life from this list: power, approval, comfort, image, control, helping, dependence, independence, work, materialism, family, relationships, pleasure, performance
- ▶ How have you experienced any of those things being “enslaving” (v. 8-9)? How can our idols end up controlling us?

III. NON-GODS: FREEDOM

- ▶ How can simply “trying harder” lead to more guilt and more enslavement?
- ▶ V. 9 says God sought to know you. Read the quote below and discuss how God pursuing to know and enjoy you leads to increasing freedom from our idols.

“What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact, which underlies it—the fact that he knows me. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind. All my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him because he first knew me and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters. There is unspeakable comfort—the sort of comfort that energizes in knowing that God is constantly taking knowledge of me in love and watching over me for my good. There is tremendous relief in knowing that his love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench his determination to bless me.” - J.I. Packer, Knowing God

What is one main take-away you want to apply in your life this week?

“An idol is anything in our lives that occupies the place that should be occupied by God alone. Anything that...is central in my life, anything that seems to me...essential...An idol is anything by which I live and on which I depend, anything that...holds such a controlling position in my life that... it moves and rouses and attracts so much of my time and attention, my energy and money.”
- D. M. Lloyd-Jones

“This means then, that idolatry is always the reason we ever do anything wrong. Why do we ever lie, or fail to love or keep promises or live unselfishly? Of course, the general answer is “because we are weak and sinful,” but the specific answer is always that there is something besides Jesus Christ that you feel you must have to be happy, something that is more important to your heart than God, something that is spinning out a delusional field and enslaving the heart through inordinate desires. So the secret to change is always to identify the idols of the heart. The Bible does not consider idolatry to be one sin among many (and thus now a very rare sin only among primitive people). Rather, the only alternative to true, full faith in the living God is idolatry. All our failures to trust God wholly or to live rightly are due at root to idolatry - something we make more important than God. There is always a reason for a sin. Under our sins are idolatrous desires.”
- Tim Keller

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