



This Sunday we continued our new topical series at Magdalen Road, thinking about sin and how to solve it. Each week will look at a different passage outlining a different model or metaphor of sin in the bible, and each week, we will see how the cross is sufficient.

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This week we thought about idolatry and began by the task of completing the sentences: I want....., I fear....., I need..... and I expect...... Often the answer to that reveal the things we value highly and point to the functional gods that we worship.

1) The Lure of idolatry

We spent much of our time in Psalm 115 as the Psalmist there urges the people of God not to trust in the idols of their neighbours, but rather to trust the true and living God who alone can provide for his people. The Psalmist begins with 4 reasons trusting idols is stupid **But God is real** – The psalmist urges his people to trust that, even though the nations taunt, and even though they cannot see him, his is in heaven.

But idols are fake – The idols of the nations are constructed by people.

But idols are feeble – They are therefore unable to help, move, speak, interact etc

But idols are fatal – v8 claims we become like that which we worship – as the people worship idols they become spiritually dead and breathless.

The application from this first section is clear that even though idols allure us, they ultimately cannot provide what we need and indeed ruin us as we become like them.

2) The Cure for idolatry

The cure in Psalm 115 is simply to engage, not in false worship, but in true – remember who God is. The Psalmist 3x calls the people, the priests and all who fear Him to trust Him, and 3x the response comes back that God will bless those who trust Him. Where the idols were impotent to actually help, so the God of the bible can give life and life forever.

We then noted that living this side of the cross, we are privileged as we see more of Gods plan and character:

1) We have a new status

Jesus died for our sin and our idolatry. Because we trust Him and His death on the cross for us, so we can be 'the righteousness of God' (2 Cor 5v21).

2) We have new hearts

Ezekiel 36v25-27 promises that under the New Covenant God will deal with our idolatry, but give us new hearts so that we might serve him and obey his laws.

3) We have new affections

The cure for idolatry is not simply to see the stupidity of idol worship, but rather to treasure the true God more and to see (as we did in Psalm 115) that he is powerful and able

Our process needs to be see how Jesus is better – if our temptation is look for meaning or value in image or money or relationships or control, then we need to remind ourselves how trusting those things are ultimately futile. And as we focus on him so we will become like him.

Here are just a few questions that might get things going, please feel very free to ignore / adapt for your group:

Finish the sentences:

I want..... I fear..... I need..... and I expect.....

What do you treasure / crave / run after / dream of?

How do you see yourself trusting these things?

Why is it easier to trust in idols rather than God?

How does the Psalmist describe the stupidity of idol worship?

How does v8 work itself out in practice? What does it mean to become like what we worship?

How does the Psalmist describe God from v9 onwards? What does he call on us to do?

How does the cross transform our relationship with idols?

How can we remember / apply these different dimensions?

What do these verses tell us about the nature of God? Sin?

How do they help in your daily battle?