

Flee from Idolatry!

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning. You'll find that in the book of Deuteronomy. We're back into our studies here at chapter 13. And if you have one of the Blue Vistas Bibles, that's page 157 in those Bibles.

Deuteronomy chapter 13, which belongs with chapter 12 and begins the detailed exposition in these middle chapters of Deuteronomy from chapter 12 right through to chapter 26, which really is an exposition, an application of the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments that are given by God to the people of Israel at Sinai.

The first command, of course, is that the Lord is the only God, and the second, that there are therefore to be no idols. And so, as we saw last time in chapter 12, there's a great emphasis on the exclusive nature of the worship of the one true God.

He is to be worshipped in His place, His way, according to what He dictates, not as everybody sees fit in their own eyes. And chapter 13 goes on to address the various temptations, lures away from that exclusive worship of the one true God.

And so, Moses says in chapter 13, verse 1, If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder that he tells you comes to pass, then if he says, Let us go after other gods which you've not known, let us serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams.

[1 : 41] For the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

But if that prophet or dreamer of dreams, you shall be put to death because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you embrace, or the friend who is as your own soul, if they entice you secretly, saying, let's go and serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known, some of the gods of the people who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the end of the earth to the other, you shall not yield to Him or listen to Him, nor shall your eye pity Him, nor shall you spare Him, nor shall you conceal Him, but you shall kill Him.

Your hand shall be first against Him to put Him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. You shall stone Him to death with stones, because He sought to draw you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

And all Israel shall hear and fear and never again do any such wickedness as this among you. If you hear in one of your cities, which the Lord your God is giving you to dwell there, that certain worthless fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying, let's go and serve other gods, which you've not known, then you shall inquire, make search, and ask diligently.

[3 : 42] And behold, if it be true and certain that such an abomination has been done among you, you shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, devoting it to destruction.

All who are in it, and its cattle with the edge of the sword, you shall gather all its spoil into the midst of the open square and burn the city, and all its spoil with fire as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God.

It shall be a heap forever. It shall not be built again. None of the devoted things shall stick to your hand, that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger and show you mercy and have compassion on you and multiply you as he swore to your fathers, if you obey the voice of the Lord

your God, keeping all his commandments that I'm commanding you today and doing what is right in the sight of the Lord your God.

Amen. May God bless to us this solemn reading from his word. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to our Bible reading this morning, chapter 13 of Deuteronomy, page 157, if you have one of the church blue Bibles.

And that's our chapter this morning. But if we wanted a text to sum up its message, Paul's words to the Corinthian church do just that. In 1 Corinthians 10, verse 14, Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

[5 : 11] At the heart of the Christian faith is worship of the one true God. And therefore, of course, the corollary that every other God is a false God.

Now, of course, it's politically very incorrect to say that sort of thing today in a world that embraces inclusivity and pluralism. And it says that really all religions are equally valid or equally invalid.

And you might find the starkness of my statement troubling. But if we take the Bible seriously at all, we have to say that we find all through Scripture warnings not to stray from this exclusive devotion to the one true God who is the only God and the only Savior for all in this world.

In fact, the very essence of sin as the Bible defines it isn't first broken rules, it is a broken relationship. That relationship between God, our Creator, and His creatures, the people He has made.

And the language that the Bible uses, of course, for that relationship is very deep. It's very intimate. It's the language of marriage. Indeed, marriage is given to man precisely to be a living relationship of that far more important love relationship between God and His people, which comes to its ultimate fulfillment in the consummation between Christ and His church.

[6 : 47] And so sin, you see, at its very heart is adultery. It's breaking faith. It's cheating. It's abusing. It's spoiling that most beautiful and precious of all relationships in the most hurtful and destructive of ways.

Sin is a vicious and a callous crime against God's faithful and beautiful love before it's ever a crime against God's law. Behind all law-breaking is love-breaking, first of all.

And that's what idolatry is. It's spiritual adultery. It's giving the love that we ought to give exclusively, completely to God alone, to our maker, to the sustainer of our lives, to the lover of our souls.

It's giving that love to an interloper, to something or to someone else that we have been seduced into seeing as more beautiful and more satisfying and more fulfilling than the one who actually made us for himself to find our fulfillment, our satisfaction, our joy, our meaning forever in him and in our knowledge of him.

And that's how the apostle Paul actually describes the very essence of humanity's first sin when he's writing to the Romans in Romans chapter 1. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and they worshipped and served the creature, the created things, rather than the creator.

[8 : 23] That is, we seek our salvation, we seek our meaning, our identity, we seek our happiness, our self-worth, our fulfillment in something or someone other than the God who made us to find it in him.

And that thing or that person or that ambition or cause, that becomes what we actually worship in life, whether we know it or not.

It takes the place of God, whether we realize it or not. It's your idol. But it's a tragic self-deception. Paul says that people's thinking has become futile and their foolish hearts have become darkened in behaving like that.

And that self-deception leads to tragic self-destruction because created things cannot save us. Mere things can never satisfy us and fulfill us and give us significance, give us meaning, give us security.

Just look at the anxiety, look at the drivenness, the dissatisfaction of our world all around. It tells a story. They can never save us, but they can enslave us because we come to serve these things.

[9 : 42] And these things come to control us. They come to rule our whole lives with their demands, with their expectations, with their real possessing power. And so you see, the 21st century is just as full of devoted idolatry as every other century has been.

Whether it's people putting all their hope in political idols, that's all around us just now. Or whether it's giving themselves to the beauty idols, the fashion idols of our world that so many people seem to gladly give their tithes and offerings to in huge abundance in order to get that look, to get that

feeling, to get that image that they think will satisfy them.

Or whether it's the idol of family, so common in our Western culture where you live for the success, the achievements of your children, or whether it's the ideal of marriage, or the relationship of deep intimacy that you long for, or whether it's your career, or whatever it is, whatever you believe will grant you the life that you long to have.

Sometimes it's not a devotion to a bad thing. Often it can be if it's drugs or some behavior that's destructive or so on, but sometimes it can be good things, healthy things, but we make these good and healthy things into ultimate things.

We build our life, our meaning, our identity, our hopes, our self-worth all on these things more than we do on God. And whatever you build your life on, you see, whatever drives you like that is what will rule you.

[11:17] It will be your God. And if it's not God, it will be something else or someone else. Bob Dylan was right. You've got to serve somebody. And even as Christian believers, John Calvin, the great reformer, was right when he said the truth is that our hearts are perpetual factories of idols.

And that's why again and again and again the Bible warns us repeatedly flee from idolatry. And so way back here in Israel's early history, that was God's word to his people through Moses.

The very first command spoken in the awe and the trembling of Sinai was this, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

And so the second command forbade idols of any kind. No other lovers are to usurp the place of God in your heart. For, said the Lord, I am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.

That's the way of disaster, he's saying, for you and for your family after you if you go that way of idolatry. Unless we're tempted to think, well, because it's different for us, we're New Testament Christians, we're not under the terror of the law at Sinai.

[12:46] Don't forget that the New Testament gives us even stronger warnings. We saw that last week in Hebrews 10 with David Jackman, didn't we? How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God Himself, profaned His precious blood of the covenant?

You see, we know far more even than the people of Israel then knew of the sheer depth of God's love to us to be our Savior. If they didn't escape, says the Apostle, when they refused Him who warned on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject Him who warns us from heaven?

For our God, the God made fully and finally known in our Lord Jesus Christ, our God, says the Apostle of Christ, is a consuming fire. He burns, you see, with holy jealousy to protect His precious marriage to His people, to you and me.

God hasn't changed. And alas, people haven't changed either and you see, the human heart is still just as prone to unfaithfulness as ever it was.

And that's why Paul warns the church in Corinth with these references to the Old Testament, warns them that they'll face the same temptations, the same spiritual adultery, the same snares of sin.

[14:09] And he writes to them they were a gifted church, a vibrant church, the jewel in Paul's crown in many ways of his church plants. And he warns them, flee from idolatry. Don't you be presumptuous.

Don't think that all your knowledge, all your giftedness is going to make you immune from these things. It won't. If you think you're standing firm, if you think you're immovable, don't think that. Be careful lest you should fall.

Flee from idolatry, he says. Flee from that great sin of unfaithfulness to the true lover of your soul, the Lord Jesus Christ. And one of the ways that Paul says to the Corinthians, you flee from idolatry, is to be humble, is to learn from the past, from the people of God.

Learn what your forebears had to learn. Whoever said history is bunk was completely wrong, wasn't they? Because it's whenever the church has forgotten its history that heresy has crept in and been able to flourish.

And so along with the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul would urge us to look back to chapters just like these in Deuteronomy 13 where Moses fleshes out, where he applies that second commandment.

[15:21] And Paul says plainly to the Corinthians, doesn't he, these things were written for us who live in these last days so that we will not fall into the same sins as they did.

Now we saw last time a couple of weeks ago when we looked at chapter 12, we saw this emphasis on the exclusivity in the worship that God demands of his people.

All these necessary negatives. Chapter 12, verse 4, you shall not worship the Lord your God in that way just like all the people all around you. No, instead you are to worship verse 5 in God's place, in his presence, under his direction.

Look at the very last section of chapter 12 with that heading there, warning against idolatry. And you see there, remember he's saying don't seek insights from all these Canaanite religions around you.

That's not enlightened thinking, verse 31. Look at it. It's an abominable thing that they are doing. Flee from that. Flee from idolatry. Flee from all that sort of interfaith confusion.

[16:25] Do what I command you to do, verse 32. No more, no less. That is how you live as true worshippers of the true God.

But of course, doing that, especially when the world around you wants you to do the very opposite, is a very hard thing. Because there are so many lures, aren't there, to false worship, to idolatry, to other loves, which so, so easily will capture our hearts.

We don't set out to desert God. Of course we don't. No more than anybody sets out to destroy their own marriage by committing adultery. But so easily we can be led astray.

And of course the devil. The devil has a PhD in human psychology. There is nobody in the world who better knows your weaknesses and better knows how to trap you, how to exploit those things than the devil.

He knows your heart and he knows mine. And he will use the very things that make you most vulnerable and me. That's why we've got to be street wise.

[17:31] That's why we've got to be ready to fight him and sometimes to flee. And that's why Moses didn't stop at the end of chapter 12 here. That's why he gives us chapter 13 to alert us to some of these most powerful lures to idolatry and false worship that we will face in our lives.

Because he wants us to be forewarned so as to be forearmed. It's just as we heard last Sunday night from Edward in 2 Peter chapter 3. The apostle and Moses wants us not to be carried away with error so as to lose our stability.

All the Bible writers write these warnings to us so that we will show true constancy and not total collapse in our faith. And God will allow us many things that we have to face in life which will test our loyalty to him very severely indeed.

Look at verse 3 here in chapter 13. That's what he's saying. He's testing us to see whether we really do love the Lord with all of our heart and soul and strength.

That's the crucial issue in this chapter. Is the Lord your God really the Lord alone in our hearts? Is he really our great love above all other things?

[18:51] Or to use the much starker language of this chapter do we really love him enough to execute and destroy all opposition? That's how seriously God takes this as we can see here.

We might feel very squeamish about the language in this chapter about the actions that God demands of his people then in this chapter. But as C.S. Lewis says we need to be careful.

It's not because we have greater Christian sympathy. It's really because of our appalling moral apathy. Or as Christopher Wright in his commentary says it's not because we have greater appreciation of human life but because we have lost all sense of the majesty of God.

And so yes a chapter is in the Bible a chapter like this to shock us to wake us up to jolt us to see just how seriously it is to be lured away from loyalty to our true God.

It's here to warn us so that that thing will not happen because God loves us because he doesn't want us to be hurt. He doesn't want us to be damaged and destroyed. Sometimes when as a parent you have to warn your children it makes them upset doesn't it?

[20:07] When you shout don't go down the road! And sometimes your child will burst into tears but you've stopped them from stepping out into the path of a bus or a lorry which would have crushed their little hearts to death.

And that's what God is doing sometimes in the Bible. He's shouting to us it makes us tremble even weep. It's because he loves us and he warns us of dangers.

So in this chapter there are three key dangers and temptations that are powerful lures that we must resist if we're going to be true to our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the first is there in verses 1 to 5 and it's the lure of very successful and indeed spectacular spirituality. Something very spiritual looking can be a very powerful idol.

And what's described in verses 1 and 2 is very impressive isn't it? Signs and wonders are very impressive in ancient Israel in 1st century Corinth and in the 21st century today. And sometimes these things do happen.

[21 : 17] They do come to pass. Sometimes there are great movements of real success and it comes to public notice and acclaim. And when great movements arrive in the church sometimes they can be very popular very well known.

They get TV airtime. They get column inches. They can excite people. And we say, look, isn't it great? Evangelical Christians are getting noticed. They're getting great exposure. Isn't that wonderful?

And so, of course, people will listen to what those kind of leaders in the limelight say. They'll be so impressed with what they seem to be doing they'll listen actually to anything that they say.

Even if, verse 2, it begins to lead away from the orthodox truth that they have known and loved and believed. And often, of course, it's very subtle at first, very surreptitious, but underneath the truth is stark.

This message, however it's dressed up, says Moses, is actually saying, come with me and let's serve other gods. And it looks so good, it looks so attractive, so successful.

[22 : 19] You think, well, it doesn't quite sound right, but it must be right, mustn't it? God must be blessing him. But look at verse 3 again, God is testing us to see if the love of our hearts really is just for him.

And we are to test these things too, he says. How? By what he has taught us, by his infallible words and commands. Look at verse 4. The true test is not power or plausibility, even if there is real power.

The true test is not success or growth or popularity or pulling power. the true test is God's clear word of command.

The truth that he has spoken, the truth that he has written, his commands, his voice that we know. And anyone who leads away from that, says God, however attractive, however successful, is not giving fresh insights from the spirit of God.

Verse 5, he is teaching rebellion against the Lord our God. He's teaching apostasy, idolatry. And that's why this punishment is so severe.

[23 : 28] It's an evil, says God, that has to be purged from the midst of his people because it's so, so deadly. And sometimes we have to warn starkly against that. I remember some years ago a popular evangelical leader who was a very big hit with the sofas and the TV studios.

He had a lovely attractive smile, very winsome. But he began to teach, he began to write urging people to move away from the orthodox Christian teaching about the cross of Jesus as the atonement for sin.

And I heard that he was speaking in our city and that some here, in fact, were going to go and hear him speak. And so I felt I had to warn against him. And some people received that very badly, did not like hearing those sort of things being said.

But that particular man has walked further and further and further away from the truth, has led many, many people with him. In fact, this very week, I had an email from a former colleague here who told me that a young teenage girl in the youth group that he had run for many years had now abandoned the church, abandoned her family, was wanting to change her identity and live as a man with a woman.

And I think this very weekend was being baptized in a new naming ceremony as a man in the church of that particular Christian leader. See, this is not just about ancient Israel.

[24 : 53] This is not ancient history we're reading about. Moses is warning us, just as Jesus did, that there will always be false prophets among God's people, luring people away from the truth with very attractive, very successful alternative ways of being the church for today's world.

Read Jeremiah 23 or Ezekiel chapter 13. They also warn about those who they say will continually say to those who despise the word of God, it will be well with you.

To everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, no disaster will ever become upon you. It's very contemporary, isn't it? Of course you don't need to worry what the Bible says in some of these verses about these things.

And even Christian parents often want to get the youngsters to persuade them not to risk their future not to risk their career leave that leave that a few years down the line and hopefully they think they'll have grown out of it by then.

Or maybe the spouse who doesn't share your Christian zeal and verse 6 exactly is it entices you secretly the relentless nagging the pillow talk that wears you down you're just spending too much time on those church things.

[31 : 12] What about me? What about the family? Surely you don't need to be quite as serious about church. What about us? Surely God wants you to give time for us. Surely God wants you to be a father or a mother for us.

Can't you be more normal like other people? It's subtle isn't it? It seems so reasonable. It's just looking for a reasonable compromise. But friends where it can all end is verse 7.

Your life just in its outlook and its priorities and everything else becoming really no different from the people who live from one end of the earth to the other. No different at all.

And that so easily happens doesn't it? There are so many idols. Just take one of the great idols in the world today. The idol of sport. One of the biggest worldwide idols. And certainly Glasgow is no exception.

It was Bill Shankly the famous Scot the manager of Liverpool who once said football is not a religion it's far more important than that. Well that's true in this city isn't it? It certainly calls the tune old firm supporters will follow their team to the ends of the earth and no expenses spared let me tell you.

[32 : 23] If the Christians in this city spent as much money on the mission of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as the old firm supporters spend on following their God and idol this city would be in a state of permanent Christian revival.

Isn't that right? And it's actually interesting to see where even committed Christians when there's a clash between an important church commitment and a sacred sporting event quite interesting to see where people's real loyalty lies isn't it?

look at verses 9 and 10 these are awful verses but you see what they're saying you see what God is saying God must come first even above those who are closest to you in life and in love if they would draw you away from the Lord and lure you to other things of course these physical sanctions mentioned here are not for us to apply today we don't live in a theocracy this was a unique time in fact in Israel's history one of the very very few when God specifically spoke of judgment in that kind of way and the New Testament is very clear our weapons are not the weapons of this world the sword is not put into the hand of the church today because we are not the state but none of that fact softens the sharpness or the challenge in these words to us today not one bit of it this is where our Lord Jesus Christ gets the very words that he uses to warn his followers

Luke chapter 13 unless you hate your mother your father your wife your children your brothers you cannot be my disciple stark language Matthew 10 whoever loves his father or mother or son or daughter more than me that's the point is not worthy of me it's just the same God must come first even before our closest earthly affections apostle Paul says just exactly the same thing put to death therefore whatever is earthly in you because it is idolatry flee that idolatry because it's so deadly if you don't it will destroy you in the end and friends we need to be as realistic about all this as the New Testament is realistic that's why Paul says don't get tangled up in your relationships especially in your intimate relationships with unbelievers because they will be a powerful lure to draw you away from the Lord

Jesus Christ it will don't do it don't think it will be different with you you can't think that and don't let your own marriage good and healthy as it may be and your own family and your children good and healthy as they are don't let them become the ultimate focus of your life where all your energies all your love all your ambition is found God must come first and in our child-centered obsessed age we need to teach our children that God is more important than them we certainly need to teach our children that they are not God and we are not God's servants so often how it seems to be today maybe you are here this morning and you know deep down that a deep and personal relationship that you have is in fact pulling you away from the Lord Jesus Christ you may be trying to pretend that it's not but deep down you know that it is

[36 : 05] God is saying to you friend don't let it don't rationalize that away don't tell yourself you'll be able to handle that God says no he knows better trust the Lord Jesus because he's jealous for you he loves you and because he does he will not share that deep and ultimate love in your heart with another and if that's you God is this morning calling you to be ruthless just like verse 10 just

like verse 15 so what Jesus said cut off that limb pluck out that eye so as not to lose the most important thing in all of life in all of eternity his love his promise his future for you in his glory don't let the lure of your closest earthly affections lead you away from Jesus the true Lord the true lover of your life and thirdly don't let's be be be beguiled either by this last powerful force in verses 12 to 18 the lure of an overwhelmingly progressive society where sheer force of numbers it's the whole city in verse 13 where they cause us to be drawn along into their corporate idolatry by imbibing the air of the culture all around and the customs and the thinking that just are pervasive everywhere we go everywhere we live with everyone we talk to it's very very familiar every society every culture has its own sacred idols the gods of the day that are celebrated that are promoted to which everybody must buy a dime

I remember when I was traveling through India being told that all these different gods of the Hindu pantheon but in certain places particular gods were particularly worshipped and venerated in one place it would be Ram and another it would be Shiva and others and so on and our western culture is just the same today the passing age of modernity it idolized reason and rationality and science and so on but of course now our culture today especially worships relativism and human autonomy and self determination we idolize in our culture personal choice personal expression these are the memes to coin that word that Richard Dawkins use these ideas that are so pervasive spreading everywhere in our society in fact it's rather ironic because it's phonetically true as well meme m-e-me-me me-me because our world is a me-me-me culture isn't it it's my life it's my body it's my choice it's my identity it's my sexual preference it's my right to choose my right not to be offended by anybody else when I do and so you see in our culture there is certainly no place is there for this uniqueness of one

God who gives meaning who gives coherence to everything and everyone and certainly no place for one Lord who rules and commands everyone in his way and his way alone that's the one thing that our culture of so-called tolerance simply will not tolerate and the whole culture you see around us speaks with one voice against that truth of God it's very powerful it's very pervasive and it's very pressing on the church to conform to that common view and especially of course today in matters of sexuality which are so much at the vanguard of that whole movement of self expression my identity expressed as I want when the whole city when the whole society just like here says that that's not idolatry that's culture this isn't perversion this is progress this is development this is sophistication you can imagine what the Israelite prophets in the subsequent generations and their theologians would be saying well of course we're very grateful for our past heritage in the evangelical Israelite movement I myself was converted under Moses I was deeply influenced by I'm very grateful to God for Moses but of course times change and the church must change and we've learned so much more about these rich exciting temple cultures in Canaan with all their sexual expression Moses couldn't possibly have known all the things that we know they used to call it idolatry but we know so much better than that now and we can see can't we what valuable insights they have to offer us these visual things these sensual things that are so much part of Canaanite worship they're actually vital for us as the people of God today if we're going to get our message out in this post-Moses world it's very familiar isn't it very contemporary it's exactly the kind of things that were being said by one of my former theological teachers last week in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland when he was leading a commission that was leading the General Assembly to endorse even more strongly the perversion of marriage that is all around in our society today something I might say 20 years ago he would not have done and would have argued the opposite but lured by the sheer force of numbers by the power of a so-called progressive society the sheer pressure to conform and that pressure is very intense it's intense for theological academics because they want and they crave recognition in their field it's intense for churchmen because they crave preferment and position in churches indeed it's powerful for churches congregations that want a good reputation want to be recognized in the communities and because of these things so many have turned and moved and gone to serve other gods which are no gods and are anti-god yes they use the language of

Christ and the gospel and the spirit they claim the spirit is leading them into new light new understanding but as Paul says to the church in Corinth it's an altogether different Jesus it's a different spirit it's a different gospel which is no gospel at all in fact Paul says there to the Corinthians doesn't he it's the deceit and the lies of the serpent himself who always masquerades not as a serpent of darkness but as an angel of light attractive plausible successful winsome isn't it

interesting that all these people who claim all these things they claim use of all the nice language liberal progressive tolerant inclusive is there anybody who had a contrary view was backward and bigoted and racist and sexist and neanderthal whenever you get somebody who will stand up for biblical truth ever on the radio or the television the BBC always introduced them as the hard liner the right winger the fundamentalist when have you ever heard them say here's a man who has firm convictions here's a

[43 : 29] Christian who is honorably consistent with the orthodox faith never but look at verse 13 you see here because God doesn't call these people progressive and liberal and tolerant and nice he calls them well the ESV has worthless fellows NIV wicked men they're worthless according to God they're wicked and what they promote look verse 14 is not helpful progress but an abomination and God's people are not to be taken in we're to root out completely that kind of dangerous influence from his church so that the entire community does not come under the judgment of God himself see that's why verse 15 here is so stark it's using exactly the same language of total destruction that was to be meted out on the heinous horrific evil of those

Canaanite tribes that God had tolerated for hundreds of years but at last had to destroy because of their sheer depth of wickedness and the point he's making is plain isn't it don't presume that because you use the name Israelite for yourself you will not come under God's judgment if you go the same way it's not calling yourself Israelite it's not circumcision of the flesh that counts it's an ongoing relationship of faithful obedience to God it's the true heart circumcision that shows you're really his that's what matters and it's shown by your obedience so don't be taken in flee from that sexual immorality from all other cultural idolatry round about us that would destroy us see verse 17 says there are some things that God's people just simply cannot have anything to do with he says you cannot have the mercy and the compassion of God if you want to keep any of these things any of that thinking any of these ideas sticking to your hands it's vivid language isn't it if these things are sticking to your hands the only thing that will stick to you is the fierce anger and judgment of God you friends the whole bible tells us that there's no cheap grace in the true gospel of Christ there cannot be the forgiveness the compassion the mercy of God without true repentance verse 18 turning away from sin and obeying instead the voice of the

Lord who is yes our great and gracious redeemer but who is our great and authoritative ruler so friends when the world around about us when the people around about you want you to change your view on the uniqueness of our lord and savior jesus christ or in the bible sexual morality or any other thing that people say we must do in order to be relevant to the world today to be progressive to be heard don't be fooled listen to god's voice listen to his assessment it's not cool it's not culturally with it's not progressive it's worthless it's wicked it's an abomination to go that way don't let the gods and goddesses of our contemporary world lure us from the only god and the only savior not the sex gods and goddesses not the ideologies the fashions the so-called freedoms and fulfillments that have drawn away so many of the inhabitants of our cities nor the lure that goes by what people might call

Jesus what might seem to be successful spectacular and so on but actually denies his words and devalues the word of God in their life and don't be lured by the great affections of your own heart by the people that you love deeply and dearly remember at the very heart of biblical faith is that great command to love the Lord our God with all of our heart with all of our soul with all of our strength love I am the Lord he says there is no other every knee shall bow and every tongue will swear allegiance to me and for us of course the me is the exalted Lord Jesus Christ he's the one that we're to love above all others forever and ever and ever so friends don't be lured away from him not by anyone not by anything you can trust him he knows better than we know and he loves us and he wants all of our heart you don't want to betray the

Lord Jesus do you you know that his love surpasses every other love you know that knowing him as we sang is the greatest thing in this world and in all eternity there's nothing greater than the love of the Lord Jesus to us and he be lured away from us so let's flee from idolatry and flee to him the one who loves us the one who gave himself for us that we should be his forever let's make it our business to help one another in this church as brothers and sisters to keep ourselves only unto him for better or for worse for richer or poorer in sickness and in health as long as we shall live for he who saves his brother or his sister has a wonderful thing and keeps them for all eternity let's pray heavenly father we know our own hearts are so weak we are so easily tempted so as we sang would you surround us with your protection and would we commit one another to surround each

other with the protection of real true

[49 : 56] Christian fellowship so as never to lure one another away from your love but to constantly be leading one another back back to the true Lord Jesus to the true gospel by the true spirit who leads only unto him and never to any other rival so Lord bid every other rival depart from each one of our hearts this day we pray and lead us in your righteousness in your life and in your great light for we ask it in Jesus name Amen