

1 John

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[0 : 0 0] to ask your attention to the chapter that we read that is the first epistle of john and chapter 5 and verse 21 the last verse in that chapter little children keep yourselves from idols little children keep yourselves from idols very short text with a very wide meaning a very wide application to each and all of us as we pass on through life i want to speak first a general remark about the preceptive part of scripture we might say here is a precept of divine truth little children keep yourselves from idols now god in his wisdom has marked out in his word preceptively the way that he would have us to walk and the way that would be profitable for us to walk in the preceptive scriptures are very clearly the teaching of a heavenly father to his children here upon the earth and you and i may think sometimes that the preceptive scriptures are against us make it very difficult for us cast up a way that is impossible to work out and walk out well i'm going to say this initially precepts need grace and to walk in the precepts of the gospel needs help from on high you cannot walk with god except by the help of god and surely the precepts of scripture mark out that good and right way whereby we may walk along the way that our heavenly father has said is profitable to us all now the bible in a sense is full of precepts do's and don'ts and we look at them sometimes and realize that in and of ourselves we're failing all the time we're coming short in the manner of life that we live but that doesn't in any way suggest that the way of precept is not the right way and we suffer by neglecting the precepts and choosing our own way and walking the way of the world in the 119th psalm you remember it's the longest psalm or the longest book in scripture you'll find there under the direction of the holy spirit many references are made to precepts some that sometimes the use use of the word statutes and sometimes the word commandments is recorded in the 119th psalm but it may please some of the younger people here tonight to go through that long psalm and find out there how many references carry with them the word precept you might want to pursue the interest and look for the word statute and maybe you will look and number to the word commandment but these are the revealed mind of god concerning that way of wisdom that is given to us to instruct us in right ways by no less than the inspiration of the almighty god now i refer to the text tonight little children keep yourselves from idols there is a very very strong natural influence in each and every one of us toward idolatry naturally speaking our hearts are not disposed toward god but rather away from god and my friends what end is in view by and through our departures from god what good can an idol do for us what ultimate benefit is to be derived from the possession of an idol we may as a professing christian people say of those many idols that are followed in the world that the people that idolize those material things cannot ultimately in the issue find any lasting benefit by their worship of false gods there's a wonderful word and i'm going to refer to it in the 115th psalm their idols are silver and gold the work of men's hands they have mouths but they speak not eyes have they but they see not they have ears but they hear not noses have they but they smell not they have hands but they handle not feet have they but they walk not neither speak they through their throat you think of the negative presentation of the truth in that sense what they can't do they can't speak they can't smell they can't hear they it's it's a negative and my friends so those that worship them they that make them are like unto them so is everyone that trusteth in them what lasting benefit can be derived from idolatry there's only

one that can do us lasting benefit there's only one that can promise us eternal life eternal life and ensure that we become possessors of eternal life only one but our God is in the heavens he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased the living and true God and all exceptions are at no lasting consequence but now little children keep yourselves from idols I say a rule or benchmark in regard to the distinction between the the true God and an idol God is this what can this do for me when I come to die idols can't do anything for us when we're face to face with eternity there's only one way to look for benefit there's only one way one place to look for help that's to the living God

God who through the Lord Jesus Christ has brought captivity captive everything that is opposed to us everything that threatens us as it were is in captivity to that purpose and promise of God everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord now let us measure so to speak the benefit of things by that standard what good will this be to me I was reading in the paper yesterday of the relatives of the late Onassis the great Greek shipping magnet and he was worth his billions and he's got a nephew and I presume it's a granddaughter that are now within a short period of time to come into the inheritance of about half each of that tremendous wealth you know

I looked at them in the paper yesterday especially the young lady who looked a very nice person indeed I thought my dear what a snare is set before you what an awful condition you're in with a heart like we have got that would as it were embrace almost limitless wealth and say I can have all that I wish for the rest of my days I wouldn't want that would you I don't covet that portion do you all my days but my days will end and then what and then what I looked at that young woman yesterday and I said poor woman poor woman with nothing more than earthly wealth to look to and trust in for the future except

[11 : 54] God shows her grace and gives her those riches that are in Christ Jesus for a never ending eternity now I've struck a note that perhaps is very general little children keep yourselves from idols anything anything that would detract you from the interest of your soul spiritually and for the glory of God eternally and he says little children I wonder why he uses that expression suggestions are made by commentators as to why the apostle was led so to speak but we must remember that John had written his gospel he'd written the revelation while on the isle that is called Patmos and it is considered that he now is at Ephesus as he writes these three letters that are recorded in these epistles an old man at the end of life's journey but he sees the danger of idolatry he sees that there is no profit in growing old and possessing an idol whatever that idol may be little children now little children are pleased with little things aren't they little children are pleased with little things that's why we give them toys at Christmas isn't it and they're their birthdays because little things please little children and my friends there is that sense in which we're little children and can make idol of little things little things we don't need as it were to come into the wealth of

Onassis Will and Pleasure no little things can captivate our hearts interests and affections and carry us away little things little children keep yourselves from idols and I tell you again and I want to emphasize this point you can't keep yourself you can't keep yourself by your own results by your own determination you can't keep yourself from idols this precept is true of all precepts we need the help of God what is the path by which the help of God is gained pray without ceasing pray that God will keep us from the deceptive possession of idols pray that God will keep us from pursuing interests in things that have no lasting profit to afford us things that will easily let us down in the crisis or crises of life little children keep yourselves from idols keep yourselves from idols

I do believe in this day and age in which we live that many idols can be designated as material benefits material benefits and you know the world is the modern world is possessed of more material benefits than I suppose any generation previously has enjoyed we've got many benefits in this day and age in which we live but we've got to be careful that those things that interest us those things that assist us and help us don't become our idol little things can captivate the interest and affection to such a degree and such an extent that there's no room for God the mind so to speak is so impregnated with this particular side issue that the main issue of our being here upon earth is sadly neglected and unthought about well little children keep yourselves from idols beware lest your mind become so engrossed with some possession of which you are possessed that perhaps your forebears never had the possibility and advantage of the help you receive through it but it's given to you and you can fall a prey to its influence upon your heart and upon your life little children keep yourselves from idols now riches can become unidol can't they all that spirit of covetousness is in us all by nature and my friends we need to be kept from looking at material things as if the things of this world are the only things that matter like the rich man who said

I'll pull down my barns and build greater he was so prosperous and he so enjoyed the blessing upon material benefits the growth of his crops and so on that he hadn't the capacity to store it all and what happened this night thy soul shall be required of thee said God was he a rich man or was he a poor man he was a poor man because in that area that is so essential to our future it was completely far removed from his thinking little children keep yourselves from idols yes a bank balance has to be left behind and other material benefits such as a lovely home a nice house all has to be left one day for our meeting with

God our maker little children keep yourselves from idols now I was thinking about Jacob and Joseph this morning I wondered sometimes in meditating upon that history of Joseph and his father Jacob whether it was consistent with the love and purpose of God to them both that they separated Jacob sent Joseph out to his brethren that was according to the decree of God but Jacob loved Joseph more than all the other members of his family and you know that preference preference and I believe there was a foundation for that preference that preference was dangerous that preference was dangerous because you can idolize a child some have had very painful experiences with regard to setting a child between their souls and God

[21 : 38] I think of that dear saint who lived in our earlier days and there's reference made in a book published by the Gospel Standard Publications under the pen of our friend Mr.

Ramsbottom I think it's Three Daughters I can't quite call to mind the title but there's a history in there of a dear woman called Mrs.

Pepler and she lived in Goethe in what was then Barclays now Oxfordshire but the Lord blessed her with a daughter and this daughter was running about and in those days there was not the protection as it were that there is today against accidents and this daughter pulled a cauldron of hot water boiling water over herself was scolded from head to foot and died and died and that dear woman she bore testimony to the fact that she idolized the child and the Lord took her child away and she said having in subsequent years given birth to six sons some of whom are now living she said the Lord never trusted me with another daughter because I idolized my first born daughter keep yourselves from idols my friends idolatry provokes

God yes a woman that feared God greatly from her youthful years a woman whose testimony is a living testimony written for our prophets but she went through that deep deep valley of divine discipline because her jealous heavenly father thought so much of her heart's affections that he wouldn't give place even to her first born daughter possessing the first place in her heart's affections what I'm really suggesting in this remark is the Lord thy God is a jealous God keep yourselves from idols because if you're left to make an idol God says from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you you see the Lord looks upon idolatry as a provoking a provoking evil and his jealousy burns and he takes away the idol in his mercy well now little children keep yourselves from idol it's possible for a child to idolize his or her father or his or her mother there is a right balance in human relationships it's wrong for a husband to idolize his wife it's wrong for a wife to idolize her husband we need continually to pray

Lord keep me from idolatry because there is a proneness within us to that evil and to that end we're to love our wives we've got every scriptural authority to pour affections upon our wives and I believe vice versa in that good relationship with God in his wisdom is created between the sexes but the allowable relationship can gradually almost imperceptibly fall a prey to the precedence or preferment of idolatry and that's where it goes wrong my friends we're constantly in need of the keeping power of God exercised within us enabling us to keep ourselves from idols now we love to hear of our young people getting on in the world don't we good when

[26 : 57] God under his blessing and by the power of his spirit enables our young people to make their way in the world in that sense we realise that temporal prosperity can be a slippery place but it is good when we witness the measure of success that God gives to our children to become established with a happy home and family and a good home in which to raise the children and sufficient as it were to give them not only the bare necessities of life but also those simple and wholesome pleasures that associate with a Christian upbringing and I've battled with this myself I know what I'm talking about we can become so engrossed in prosperity in temporal things as to swamp as it were any higher thoughts wherever we might be you know

I'm making one or two confessions today I confess your faults one to another so I don't think I do wrong in the sight of God I was given after the war a measure of prosperity it amazed me really because I didn't think I was qualified to occupy the position that was given to me but nevertheless the Lord in his providence made the way and I went I knew what it was to sit in chapel such as you're here tonight doing with me in the professed worship of God and being guilty of working out problems associating with the following morning or the following week instead of being as it were fulfilling the purpose for which I joined with the people of God on the Lord's day I was far away in spirit in the workshop or in the office working out problems that I foresaw would overtake me in the ensuing week and my business became an idol my business became an idol and my friends the

Lord struck me down with glandular fever and I thought everybody around me thought it was the end of my life and I did myself but the Lord spoke to me in an ambulance going to hospital on that memorable day and a word that as it were controlled my thoughts completely caused me to think toward the ministry of the gospel which has been my employ now for the most part of my working life and in my years of so-called retirement the word that the

Lord spoke was I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord you know I went back into industry I went back into the office and took up the reins again but my heart wasn't in it anymore my heart wasn't in it anymore you see the Lord by that stroke weaned my heart from my idol and set me on the road which he had ordained that I should occupy in my subsequent pilgrimage here below preaching the gospel didn't happen immediately oh no but it happened in due time and my heart was not fixed on anything less and anything else subsequently but this is the will of God for my future employment under the sun little children keep yourselves from idols idols are detrimental idols are thieves idols not only rob

God of glory that's due to his name they rob us personally of things which are beneficial and profitable in the context of what we really are and we're more than the animal world we've got a soul we've got a dignity which the animal world doesn't enjoy therefore it's a solemn thing if we're left to live for time without any regard or respect for the things of eternity little children keep yourselves from idols look around yourselves is there anything that as it were takes such a preeminent place in your heart and life as to occasion a neglect of those things that are spiritually profitable and to the honour and glory of

[32 : 59] God little children keep yourselves from idols now if you look with me into the Old Testament history of that nation which the Lord greatly favoured the seed of Abraham Isaac and Jacob what we know in the scripture as the Israel of God sometimes referred to as the church of God in Old Testament time the people that God separated in the world as a people unto himself and God was very jealous of that people but that people manifested what I've already referred to as a human disease that they got an inclination to idolatry now what happened when Moses was up in the mount with God what happened down below well it was a good man as it were in a responsible place

Aaron but they made an idol they made an idol when good Moses came from the very communion with the Most High to see what was going on down below what did he find well his spirit was provoked as was God's spirit provoked they were guilty of dancing round an idol and my friends you know by your knowledge of the scriptures how God's judgments were realized and the solemnity of condemnation rested upon the nation for their departure from the true and living God

I can come on again can I not to the time when the people of God mingled unnecessarily with the nations that were idol worshipping people and the children of Israel over whom God was very jealous they became contaminated with the idolatrous practices of the evil nations the idolatrous nations what did that bring upon the Israel 70 years captivity in Babylon was God unjust in as it were preparing that sore discipline for his offending people in no wise in no wise the fault was theirs they'd done what God told them they shouldn't do they didn't keep themselves from idols they strayed into forbidden territory and imbibed influences from the nations round about which separated their hearts from God and defiled their mode and manner of worship

God being displeased he sold them into the hands of their enemies to chasten them little children keep yourselves from idols keep yourselves from idols God punishes idolatry in the lives and in the hearts and lives of his people we need preserving we need keeping we need the exercise of the fear of the Lord we need that grace to walk humbly and carefully and prayerfully before our God a terrible thing is idolatry I just referred to Jacob and Joseph and I've wandered a long way from that thought but I return to it for a minute was the affection between those two gracious persons one older than the other by a generation was the affection that existed between them that was witnessed by those brothers those other children of

Jacob and caused them to be envious and jealous of the relationship between their father and this youngest son at that particular time known as Joseph it's a solemn thing isn't it and what happened Joseph was taken from Jacob sold into Egypt I know the hand of God was in it and good ultimately came out of it but there were years of separation between the one and the other Jacob lost the pleasure and benefit of the presence of

[39 : 14] Joseph whom he highly esteemed and who occasioned much grief and sorrow Joseph is not is not and Simeon is not was it and now will you take Benjamin from me or he was carrying the pain in subsequent years of the fact that Joseph had been taken from him was Joseph guilty of idolizing his father that God should indeed permit that distinction and difference to exist between them for so many years one looks at these situations squarely and prayerfully sometimes and wonders being men of like passions with ourselves we say but Jacob deserved to be deceived because Jacob was a deceiver and he was deceived by his sons concerning the selling into

Egypt of the esteemed son of their father there's another lesson for those of us to think about as a man soweth that should he also reap Jacob sowed seeds in relation to his father when he deceived Isaac in thinking that he was Esau and not Jacob but subsequently he had years under deception when he thought Joseph was dead but Joseph was yet alive you know my friends it's a solemn thing to live in that sense with such weaknesses inherent in our very being but it's the grace of

God we need it's the protection and care of the most high that we need we need to walk humbly with God we need to seek God's help day by day his preserving influence and his upholding strength we cannot walk uprightly in and of ourselves we need the Lord to be our strength and stay continually my humble counsel would be and I preach to myself as well as preach to you seek the blessing of God continually in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths commit thy way unto the Lord trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass right walking is by the help and grace of God

I know no other no alternative I know no other way of walking uprightly but by the grace and help of God continually little children keep yourselves from idols what may be a snare to you may be no snare to me what may hold your interests and affections detrimentally may have no bearing upon my thinking at all vice versa vice versa I may be troubled with some besetting sin that inclines me as it were to embrace something that provokes God stirs God's jealousy and causes God to withdraw the influences of his spirit from my heart you don't know anything about it never been a trouble to you but it can be a daily trouble to me but what a benefit day by day to have the conviction that without

God I cannot walk through this day rightly properly and in the fear of God praying always with all prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God little children keep yourselves from idols what I really say beware of the spirit of idolatry that's in us all beware of putting as it were something alternative in the rightful place of the most high seek to be in the fear of God seek to invoke the help of God seek to enjoy the presence and pleasure of God and my friends this is virtually the experience with that good man in early scripture experience that Enoch walked with God may God help us may God strengthen us may God keep us and may

[45 : 19] God in the person of Jesus Christ be our all and in all Amen the quown and misses bullets and engage to mic here nextylene In 255 to 385 Happy the men will fear the Lord that from the power of sin be found rejoice and tremble at His word and hide it deep within their hearts In 255 to 385 Happy the men will fear the Lord that from the heart of sin be found rejoice and tremble at His word and my name is the Lord that from the heart of sin be found and my name is the Lord that from the heart of sin be found and my name is the Lord that from the heart of sin be found and my name is the Lord and my name is the Lord to speak from as the Lord may help me this morning you will find in the 48th chapter of the book of Genesis

Genesis. Now read by way of text. The 17th are the first part of the 19th verses. Genesis 48 verse 17.