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*Romans 1:28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup> they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. <sup>32</sup> Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also*

*Hosea 4:7 They changed their glory into shame...*

Key:

P.3: thinking; hearts; fools.

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## **The Downward Spiral of Idolatry**

The Loss of Meaning and the Problem of Idolatry—part 5

March 26, 2023

### **The inevitable downward spiral of idolatry**

Idolatry “promises” the moon but eventually leads to:

—>disappointment, which leads to

—>dissatisfaction, which leads to

—>disillusionment, which leads to a

—>craving for more, ending in

—>slavery or addiction

*Col. 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, **which is idolatry.** <sup>6</sup> Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

*Ephesians 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires...*

*John 8:34 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*

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## A different idol: a worldview or a cause

Mark 7:6 He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. <sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’<sup>8</sup> You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to **human traditions**.”

John 12:43 ...for they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God.

## Idolatry of the heart

Ezekiel 3:7 But the people of Israel are not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for all the Israelites are **hardened** and **obstinate**.

Ezekiel 14:3 “Son of man, these men have **set up idols in their hearts** and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all?

Ezekiel 14:4 Therefore speak to them and tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When any of the Israelites set up idols in their hearts and put a wicked stumbling block before their faces and then go to a prophet, I the LORD will answer them myself in keeping with their great idolatry. <sup>5</sup> I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.’

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## The downward spiral of idolatry in Romans 1

Rom. 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup> and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images** made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

The downward spiral of idolatry takes a gargantuan toll:

- a. Their **t**\_\_\_\_\_ became futile
- b. Their foolish **h**\_\_\_\_\_ were darkened.
- c. “They claimed to be wise but became **f**\_\_\_\_\_.”

## The downward spiral into dysfunction

Romans 1:24 Therefore **God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts** to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. <sup>25</sup> They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

<sup>26</sup> Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup> In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

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