

# The Servant



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*The purpose of this newsletter is to pass along information and ideas to help the Lord's servants as they minister to others. Feel free to use any of it in your ministry*

## Better Worship

Idolatry was one of the gravest sins of the Israelites in the Old Testament. If Satan cannot get you to break the first commandment, he will double his efforts to get you to violate the second. "Thou shalt not make any graven image, neither shalt thou bow down and worship them." The second commandment is a millstone that will grind the Catholic Church to powder. Down with idolatry! AMEN. We only bow before the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Grace sets us free from the idolatry of Egypt, but grace does not make us derelicts. You see, there is a danger that we misunderstand Grace and become idle worshipers (that is spelled i-d-l-e). While Satan has given up on making me bow down before inanimate things made of wood and plaster (I know too much. I know the Lord Jesus as my Savior. I know that idols are dumb and stupid things), he shall try to get me to believe that Salvation means being an "idle worshiper," doing nothing.

If Satan cannot keep a man from worshipping God, he will try to keep him from serving God. I don't believe we will find many "idol" worshipers in our assemblies. I do however, believe our assemblies are filled with too many "idle" worshipers. Idle worshipers are those who are idle and are doing nothing.

Paul pointed out in 1Thes. 1:9 that Christianity is more than turning from idols. The Thessalonians were those who "turned to God from idols to *serve* the living and true God." It is true that there is nothing that we can "do" to save ourselves. Jesus did it all. But the true believer asks (along with Paul on the Damascus Road) "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Even though he was saved by Grace, Paul was not about to become an idle worshiper. Paul exchanged a religion for a relationship. Speaking of God he said, "Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23).

James warned the church about idle worshipers. He reminds us not to just be "hearers of the word, but doers.."

The Sins of Sodom are not what most people think they are. We have more "Spiritual Sodomites" in the church than most people think. There are three sins of Sodom listed by Ezekiel. "Pride, fullness of bread, and an abundance of idleness." These are the sins that make a country or a congregation weak. The first is a weapon of mass destruction, the second a weapon of mass detraction, and the third a weapon of mass distraction. If one won't work he will try another. Abundance of idleness has ruined more good boys than anything else. An idle mind is still the devil's workshop. Jesus asked the men in Mat. 20:6 "why stand ye here all day idle?"

Satan tried to get Christ to "bow down and worship." Jesus quoted Deut. 10:6 and brought two important aspects of faith together by adding to the "only God shalt thou worship" the important "and him only shalt thou serve." (Mat. 4:10). Worship and Service, they go together. One warns about "idol" worship, and the other about "idle" worship.

### Ideal Christmas

O where is he that we might worship him  
Said those who came from distant lands so far  
"Me too" said one whose heart was black with sin  
how far from faith the world of sinners are

While our Lord does not ask for many things  
Or for many things has he made appeal  
But just that what in worship someone brings  
That he first would make sure that it is real

For this the worship that the Father seeks  
Is neither made of silver, bronze, or gold  
And is not just for Romans, Jews or Greeks  
Nor is it something that is bought or sold

It must be more than gifts of Magi kings  
That brings more joy to God than Manger's star  
Tis **Truth and Spirit** more than Angel's wings  
He wishes more than spices from afar

## Fishers or Fishy?

Being called a "Philistine" by a Hebrew, was no complement. To be a "Philistine" was to be the spiritual equivalent of a Neanderthal. Every child has heard of the world's most famous Philistine named Goliath. Yet not every Philistine is as easily recognizable as the big "galoot" from Gath.

The spirit of the Philistines is still around today. It is more easily recognized if we look for bad ideas rather than bad people. They are found on Broadway, and Wall Street, and Hollywood, and Washington. Goliath is more likely to carry a philosophy than a sword, but it is just as sharp, pointed and dangerous.

Consider a few things about the Philistines: **They were religious.** The idea that Philistines are not religious is wrong. They were "very" religious (by the way, humanism is a religion). Philistines worshiped Dagon the fish god. Today is no different. Everyone believes in something. However, if you listened to most people describe their philosophy of life and watch how they live, you would soon suspect something is "fishy." No one can believe god is a fish (or themselves) and be "all right" in the head or the heart. We laugh at the idea of a god that looks like a fish, but if we could see what most people "really" worship today, we would stop laughing.

No one has ever found a Philistine Bible, but if they did, it might not be unlike many text books in any of our modern business schools. For many, (evolutionists and economists alike) life is about "big fish eating little fish." The goal in life is therefore aspiring to be a "big fish." It was the faith of the Philistine.

**They were unimpressed by God's people.** While the Philistine had "heard"

about Israel's God, they certainly did not know him. They certainly would not know much about him if they had studied the life of Eli or his two sons. It is sad indeed, when a company loses its vision, identity, and integrity. It is worse when a company of believers lose their faith and testimony. Philistines are not afraid to fight a bunch of Hebrews who are living like Philistines. Shame on the church which has sunk to the level of using the world's methods as they try to win the world.

**They tried to use God.** They captured the Ark. It was humiliating. It was just as well however. Inside the Ark was the ten commandments and the Israelites were not keeping them very well anyway. Perhaps if we don't keep what God has entrusted to us, He will allow those things to be "taken away" also.

They "took the Ark," but they took God too lightly. Many people do. They do not realize just how holy, awesome, and mighty God is. We can't take God anywhere. He takes us. Many people, like the Philistines, think they can "take" God and bring him into their temples. *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain..."* The third commandment is a warning about "taking" God, or his things too casually. Taking the name of Jesus should not be done carelessly. They added the Ark to their collection of religious artifacts.

**Idols cannot save.** Dagon, came crashing down in the night. He was found headless and handless. Idols and religion cannot save us. How clearer must God be? What was left was a stump. Some translations call it the "fishy part," that remained. Even after we see ourselves a "sinner," and God breaks off the head and hands of our bad ideas and sin, there is still a "fishy" part that remains. Part of our sinful human nature will ever remain with us until we die. We need to be aware it is there every time we cross a threshold (1Sam. 5:5).

Every time we step out the door to face a world filled with Philistines or step into the secrecy of our home and close the door, we should remember Dagon and the Devil and the "fishy part" that remains (Gen.4:7; 1Pet.5:8).

**They blamed God for all their troubles.** What follows would be funny if it were not so sad. These superstitious Philistines now tried to "get rid of God." They thought God (the Ark) was the reason for all their problems. Pontus Pilate did not know what to do with Jesus. These Philistines did not know what to do with God. We have witnessed the Philistines try to get God out of the public schools, government, and society in general. Many think God is the problem. Some have tried to get his name off our money, or out of our pledges. Watching Philistines try to send God away is sad, but sadder was when the Jews did the same (not recognizing Immanuel spoken of by Isaiah, the prophet). John said "he came unto his own and his own received him not." That is sad.

**The worst idol is the idol of self.** Few will admit today that they worship a "fish god." The Philistine is not a picture so much of the sinner as the sinful human nature that lives in every man. Goliath is not "converted" by God's account, he is "killed." So it must be in our own story. Goliath is too big for Sunday School. We can dress him up, but that will not change his nature or nastiness. We must be born-again. "Old things must "pass away," before they can become "new" (2Cor. 5:17). Then rather than bowing before "fishy" things, we can become "fishers of men." 🐟



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