

How Not To Become A Functional Atheist or Idolater

Kerry S. Doyal, Pastor

Want to look like an unbeliever? Care to have core traits that make you indistinguishable from atheists, agnostics or ignorant pagans? Good news! It doesn't take becoming a serial killer, a suicide terrorist or a child abuser. According to Romans 1:21-23 all it takes is. well, read it for yourself:

"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.
22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools
23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God
for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and
reptiles." NIV

It is one small step for man yet one giant leap for mankind from not honoring and thanking God to becoming foolish and functional idolaters. To know about God and not give Him due credit (glory) or proper thanks is to be no different than your run of the mill atheist or blatant idolater. Ouch!

Arguably, the fearful pagan sacrificing chickens to appease an unknown Creator is closer to true worship of God than we educated, techno-driven pure materialists who live without properly praising or thanking God.

To ascribe credit for one person's work to another is to be guilty of lying. In this case, it is bearing false witness about our Ultimate Neighbor. It is to misrepresent the one (or impersonal forces) who did not do the work - giving them / it undue credit. And, it is to strip away deserved praise, thanks and lauding to the One who did the work.

For me to take credit for the Mona Lisa or the Magna Carta is beyond funny. It is insulting to all involved.

One of the dangers of pure atheistic evolution (life came from time, chance and eternally existing, non-living matter) is the ascribing of some of God's best work to nothing but cosmic luck. To assert that our beautiful mountains, that awesome sky and those humbling oceans "just happened" is to mute their testimony of their Creator.

In rejecting the work of the Creator, we become deaf to the heavens when they declare the glory of God (see Psalms 19 & 8). Nature's songs of praise cannot be heard because there is no One it would sing to. Even if it were left to the rocks to cry out, we could not hear them if they did.

Beyond sad and tragic, that is blasphemous - if not by design then by default.

It is not the loss of Adam or Eve to evolution that is most tragic - though the biblical / theological magnitude of that cannot be overstated. It is that God is banished from the garden of our weedy hearts, leaving us less than fig leaf clad. And we are left to turn the created into the Creator.

Seeing God for Who He is - His awesome character - is the basis of praise. Such a vision or memory leads us to give or "ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name" (Ps. 29:2). To understate Who He is in any dimension will naturally limit and minimize the praise we offer Him. The bigger our vision of Him, the better, more complete our praise.

Thanksgiving focuses on what God has given or provided us. It flows from our acknowledging that every good and perfect gift has indeed come down from our heavenly Father (James 1:17). We thank Him for gifts He bestows because of Who He is. We express and site what He has done for us, or mercifully not done or allowed to happen to us.

Is gratitude a struggle for you? Could some of it be dealt with by remembering Who is Whom and whom is not? Do you need in any way to re-enthroned the Creator, knowing our rightfully jealous God will not share His glory with anyone? Careful meditation on passages like John 1:3 and Col. 1:16, 17 might help refocus our hearts.

A focus on God - rather than mere gratitude or guilt for all our stuff, health and "blessings" - will best restore us to being people who are truly thankful in ways that give Him glory. It is then we will do as the psalmists says:

"Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice."
(Psalm 105:1-3 - NIV)

Pastor Kerry S. Doyal
Grace Ev. Free Ch. - Kingsport, TN