

## Flee Idolatry

“Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things: Miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? Or what provoketh thee that thou answerest? I also could speak as ye do; If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could join words together against you, And shake my head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, And the solace of my lips would assuage your grief. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged; And though I forbear, what am I eased?” (Job 16:1-6).

Five-hundred years before the time of Christ, in the city of Babylon, a great stir was caused in the public market, and was recorded as follows: “Pressing forward and peeping over the heads of the people, we see a man stretched upon a mattress, and apparently just about to die. A few weeping friends kneel at his side, and we learn that he has been brought from his home, and laid down in the public marketplace, in vain hope that someone may propose a remedy which will save his life. This custom, so strange to us, is common in Babylon, they say. When all else has failed, when doctors and sorcerers have done their best, the sick person is transported to the open square, and advice is asked from the crowd which is sure to gather.

“Today, as ever, each has a different remedy to propose, though all are agreed as to the cause of illness. A demon possesses the man, of that there is no question. ‘Come away, little one!’ cries an old woman, drawing back her grandson. ‘Go not too near, lest the evil spirit leave the man, and seize upon thee. Often have I seen it. Bel be praised that I have his image!’ And she draws forth a little clay image of Bel, and hangs it carefully on the neck of her grandson. ‘Hast thou tried the wool of a young sheep?’ asks a woman of the sick man’s wife. ‘Let a sorcerer tie seven knots in it, on seven moonlight nights. Tie the strands around thy husband’s neck, around his limbs, around his head. So shall his soul not leave his body.’

“Try the recipe of Asshurbanipal the Assyrian,’ cries another. ‘It is well known and never fails. Six different kinds of wood, a bit of snake skin, some wine, and a piece of ox flesh. Make a paste, and cause the sick man to swallow it.’

“A man hurries up with a handful of clay, and molds a little figure which he displays as the image of the sick man. We cannot see the resemblance, but the crowd presses forward and watches his motions with eager curiosity. He calls for a cup of wine, pours part of it over the image, and after drinking the rest, mutters an incantation. All in vain, while he is yet speaking, the family of the sick man raises a chorus of wails, in which the crowd joins. The man is

dead; no charm can avail him more” (Arnold: Stories of Ancient People, pg. 123).

The story depicts practices all too common in the scriptures, by idolatrous people. It was said of Ahaziah, son of Ahab: “And Ahaziah fell down through the lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this sickness” (2 Kings 1:2). As the servant went out, “the angel of Jehovah said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it because there is no God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith Jehovah, Thou shalt not come down from the bed whither thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed... So he died according to the word of Jehovah which Elijah had spoken” (2 Kings 1:3-4, 17).

Here is the best advice: to the Corinthians, the apostle said, “Wherefore, my beloved, flee idolatry” (1 Corinthians 10:14). Ross Triplett, Sr.