

EARTHLY LOVES VS. HEAVENLY LOVE

JOURNALISTS realize that for some years past the civilized world has entered upon an epoch of passion, lust and crime. Editors, especially of the better journals, realizing that the publication of details tends to stir up anger and lustful passions, are unitedly suppressing these. Their wisdom is to be commended, especially in view of the fact that their business managers, knowing the depraved taste of the people, realize that the more nauseating the details, the greater the interest of the public in general, and the greater their appreciation of the journal which panders to their taste.

There are different ways of accounting for this wave of passion and crime. Our enemies would doubtless charge that our teachings, favoring the idea that the Bible Hell is not a place of eternal torment, but the *tomb*, are setting at liberty human passion by taking off the brake of fear. Our reply is that the vicious do not receive our message. As the Scriptures declare, "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise [in wisdom from on High] shall understand." The viciously wicked are not sufficiently interested to find out what we believe or teach. Their beliefs are not built upon the Word of God, but upon the general weight of denominational prestige.

On the contrary, our charge is that the general unbelief in God and in the Bible – unbelief in any kind of Hell or Heaven – more likely has to do with this wave of crime. For the past thirty years our great colleges have been turning out agnostics by the thousands. Nearly every graduate is an agnostic. The influence of their unbelief in the Bible pervades every stratum of society, because of their influence in the higher walks of life – in the pulpit, in social circles, etc. And be it noted that the crimes of our day are frequently

committed by college-bred men and women, and by others who, under their influence, discredit the Bible as the Word of God.

But we believe that there is something peculiar to our time, in addition to the foregoing. Ours is a day of great mental activity in every direction – a day of push, of feverish excitement, along all lines. Highly seasoned foods and drinks whet the physical appetite, and lead on to spicy desires in every direction. The strain is too great for our race, considering its weakness, its degeneration attained during the past six thousand years. But whatever is the philosophy, the fact remains that the world is in a very feverish condition, in a condition of intense excitement, easily aroused to expression along every line – anger, malice, hatred, strife, envy, pride.

God's consecrated people, although not *of* the world, [R5248 : page 166] are *in* the world. Although they are New Creatures, with new wills, "sanctified in Christ Jesus," nevertheless they "have this treasure in earthen vessels." Their earthen vessels are subject to like passions and storms to those which assail the world in general. If we are right in supposing that the Adversary himself and the fallen angels have much to do with the excitement of passions in wrong directions, then we may feel sure also that these spirit adversaries would be especially on the alert to entrap and ensnare the consecrated followers of the Lord. As St. Paul expresses it, "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11), and we realize that flesh and blood is not competent for a struggle against the "wicked spirits in influential positions." (Eph. 6:12.) The Lord's people, therefore, need to be on the alert more than do others, even though all need to be specially alert now to withstand the evil tendencies of our day, which *all admit*, however they may explain them.

"KEEP THY HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE"

The secret of the Christian's strength consists in his having given up his own will – the will of his own flesh – and having taken instead of it the will of Christ. His danger consists of the endeavor of his

flesh to override the decision of his new will. The flesh covertly insists that this and that and the other things are not *wrong*, because they are *natural*. It insists that its rights should be conserved; it even sometimes insists that the New Creature would commit a crime in mortifying the flesh, with its affections and desires. – Col. 3:5; Gal. 5:24.

The New Creature cannot rely upon the suggestions of the flesh in every matter. Experience teaches it that it would be deceived and ensnared if it gave heed to the counsels of the flesh. Hence the New Creature must rely wholly upon the Lord and His counsel – the Word of God. The New Creature's reasoning upon any subject must be along the lines of Divine instruction. He *dare not* trust his own judgment, the judgment of his own flesh in the matter; neither dare he trust the judgment of fellowmen, who might be more or less influenced by their fleshly minds, however conscientious, and however proper they might intend their advice to be. The New Creature must hear from the Word of God the outline of his proper course, and must follow. He dare not deviate from it, not knowing what dire results might follow.

As the Christian advances in spiritual development, in control of the flesh, in the appreciation of the mind of Christ, he certainly does, in one sense of the word, become "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" – the power of the Holy Spirit. He becomes more gentle, more meek, more patient, more brotherly-kind, more loving. He is thus developing the fruits and growing in the graces of the Holy Spirit and in character-likeness to the Master and Pattern. But his dangers are not over; for he finds the Adversary and the flesh ready to attack him along new lines – totally different from those of the attacks when he first gave his heart to the Lord.

These later attacks are along the lines of love – the very climax of spiritual attainment. As a New Creature, he desires that his love shall be pure, holy, spiritual. He desires that his love for the brethren

shall be along the same lines as is his love for the Father and for the Son and for the holy angels. But as he attempts to adjust this love to present conditions, his holy and pure intentions and ambitions and desires are assailed by the flesh.

Not merely do the brethren and sisters, like himself, appreciate spiritual things, purity, truth, etc., but their development in the fruits of the Spirit tend to make them more attractive in the flesh, as well as more attractive in mind and disposition. As the spiritual love and confidence and fellowship increase, there is a new danger through the weaknesses of the flesh. Hence there is necessity for every child of God to be constantly on the alert – watching unto prayer against any and every intrusion of the fleshly mind, its appetites and desires. It must be mortified, crucified, killed, *whatever the cost*, in order that the New Creature may survive. The *life* of the one means the *death* of the other. The sooner we comprehend this great truth, the better for us.

"SET YOUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE"

These earthly loves do not always tend toward sensuality, but they do *always* tend in another direction from the interests of the New Creature. We have known instances in which very strong attachments grew up between *brethren*, and similarly between *sisters*, to their spiritual injury. The injury consists in a satisfaction of the longings of their souls in an earthly companionship, however pure. It is not the Lord's intention that His people should have heart-satisfaction in anybody, on the earthly plane. It is His intention that thorough loyalty to Him and to His Word will make us realize our individual responsibility to Him, and draw us individually close to Him, that in Him we may each find the companionship, joy, and peace which all true hearts crave.

Any satisfaction, therefore, in the fellowship of the old creature, however pure-intentioned, is to the discredit of the New Creature and his spiritual fellowship with the Lord. The fact that we would be fully

satisfied in any one on the earthly plane should be an evidence to us that we have not attained that lofty sentiment and aspiration which the Lord designs for us and which He alone can satisfy. [R5249 : page 166]

The admission into our lives of a close, absorbing fellowship in the flesh, however pure the intention, would be a disadvantage to the New Creature in another way. Not only would it imply his failure to rightly appreciate the Lord and fellowship with Him, but it would imply a failure to rightly appreciate the fellowship of the entire Body of Christ, which is the Church.

The Spirit of Christ is too broad to permit the centering of our sympathy and interest upon one individual, except that individual be the Lord Himself. As for others – the Body of Christ, the Church – our interest should be in all of them, not merely in the rich, but in the poor; not merely in the wise and noble, but in the less wise and ignoble; not merely in the educated, but also in the ignorant and stupid. Our interest must not be in the flesh, but in them as New Creatures in Christ. And those who have the greatest handicap as respects earthly teaching and weaknesses of the flesh are the ones deserving of our earthly sympathies and affections, as they strive to fight the good fight and overcome their blemishes.

We exhort, therefore, that we as the Lord's people set our affections more and more upon the things above, and not on the things of the earth, that we may be transformed, that we may thus prove what is the good and acceptable will of God – that His will may be done in us perfectly. His will is not unreasonable. He remembers our frame – that it is but dust. He desires our will to be that our consecration shall be to Him, that it shall not be along lines of the flesh, but of the spirit, and not merely toward one individual, or little clique of the Church, but toward all who have named the name of Christ and who have set their faces Heavenward as soldiers of the cross marching toward the antitypical Mount Zion and the

general Assembly of the Church of the First-born. – Psalm
103:14; Romans 8:4; Hebrews 12:23.

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