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The Ultimate Power Source!

Misplaced affections need to be replaced by the far greater power
of the affection of the gospel.

~Thomas Childers

“Do not love the world or the things in the world.
If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

~1 John 2:15

SEVEN

The Ultimate Power Source!

Born March 17, 1780, Thomas Chalmers was a Scottish mathematician, political economist, and a leader of the Free Church of Scotland. He was a highly influential theologian and preacher. Highly regarded during his lifetime as a natural theologian, his works have left an indelible mark on Christendom. One such work is entitled *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*, rooted in 1 John 2:15—“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” I encourage you to read this entire writing, located at the Theology Network on the web. Here is just a portion to whet your appetite and arouse your *new affection*.

A moralist will be unsuccessful in trying to displace his love of the world by reviewing the ills of the world. Misplaced affections need to be replaced by the far greater power of the affection of the gospel. There are two ways in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world – either by a demonstration of the world’s vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, which shall have nothing to succeed it, but to exchange an, old affection for a new one.

My purpose is to show, that from the constitution of our nature, the former method is altogether incompetent and ineffectual and that the latter method will alone suffice for the rescue and recovery of the heart from the wrong affection that domineers over it.

A new affection is more successful in replacing an old affection than simply trying to end it without supplanting it with something better. The ascendant power of a second affection will do, what no exposition however forcible, of the folly and worthlessness of the first, ever could effectuate. And it is the same in the great world. We shall never be able to arrest any of its leading pursuits by a naked demonstration of their vanity. It is quite in vain to think of stopping one of these pursuits in any way else, but by stimulating to another. In attempting to bring a worldly man, intent and busied with the prosecution of his objects, to a dead stand, we have not merely to encounter the charm which he annexes to these objects – but we have to encounter the pleasure which he

feels in the very prosecuting of them. It is not enough, then, that we dissipate the charm, by a moral, and eloquent, and affecting exposure of its illusiveness. We must address to the eye of his mind another object, with a charm powerful enough to dispossess the first of its influences, and to engage him in some other prosecution as full of interest, and hope, and congenial activity, as the former.

It is this which stamps an impotency on all moral and pathetic declamation about the insignificance of the world. A man will no more consent to the misery of being without an object, because that object is a trifle, or of being without a pursuit, because that pursuing terminates in some frivolous or fugitive acquirement, than he will voluntarily submit himself to the torture, because that torture is to be of short duration. If to be without desire and without exertion altogether is a state of violence and discomfort, then the present desire, with its correspondent train of exertion, is not to be got rid of simply by destroying it. It must be by substituting another desire, and another line or habit of exertion in its place – and the most effectual way of withdrawing the mind from one object, is not by turning it away upon desolate and unpeopled vacancy – but by presenting to its regards another object still more alluring.

These remarks apply not merely to love considered in its state of desire for an object not yet obtained. They apply also to love considered in its state of indulgence, or placid gratification, with an object already in possession. It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction. At least, it is very seldom, that this is done through the instrumentality of reasoning. It may be done by excessive pampering – but it is almost never done by the mere force of mental determination. But what cannot be destroyed, may be dispossessed – and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind.

It is thus, that the boy ceases, at length, to be the slave of his appetite; but it is because a manlier taste has now brought it into subordination – and that the youth ceases to idolize pleasure; but it is because the idol of wealth has become the stronger and gotten the ascendancy and that even the love of money ceases to have the mastery over the heart of many a thriving citizen; but it is because, drawn into the whirl of city politics, another affection has been wrought into his moral system, and he is not lorded over by the love of power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or other, this is unconquerable. Its adhesion to that

on which it has fastened the preference of its regards, cannot willingly be overcome by the rending away of a simple separation. It can be done only by the application of something else, to which it may feel the adhesion of a still stronger and more powerful preference. Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart, that it must have a something to lay hold of – and which, if wrested away without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind as hunger is to the natural system. It may be dispossessed of one object, or of any, but it cannot be desolated of all. Let there be a breathing and a sensitive heart, but without a liking and without affinity to any of the things that are around it, and, in a state of cheerless abandonment, it would be alive to nothing but the burden of its own consciousness, and feel it to be intolerable. It would make no difference to its owner, whether he dwelt in the midst of a gay and godly world, or, placed afar beyond the outskirts of creation, he dwelt a solitary unit in dark and unpeopled nothingness. The heart must have something to cling to – and never, by its own voluntary consent, will it so denude itself of its attachments, that there shall not be one remaining object that can draw or solicit it.¹

The second sentence of this passage from Thomas Chalmers sermon is the key to understanding “the expulsive power of a new affection”...

Misplaced affections need to be replaced

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And that is why we need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day. Chalmers goes on to shed greater light on the key to moving beyond mere behavior modification to total heart transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit

We know of no other way by which to keep the love of the world out of our heart than to keep in our hearts the love of God—and no other way by which to keep our hearts in the love of God, than by building ourselves on our most holy faith.

In the gospel, and there only, is where God stands revealed as an object of confidence to sinners—and where our desire after Him is not chilled into apathy by that barrier of human guilt which intercepts every approach that is not made to Him through the appointed Mediator.²

Thomas Chalmers profoundly identifies the believer's ultimate power source as the love of God, stirred in the hearts of man by the Holy Spirit. It is only by replacing our affection for this world with a new affection for Jesus that lasting change and life-long transformation takes place. The Holy Spirit changes our "wanter," as Dr. Kennedy was fond of saying, creating in us an appetite for the things of God rather than the things of this world. The work of the Holy Spirit pulls out our unproductive, unhealthy, and unwanted previous appetites by their roots—but doesn't leave us there. The Spirit goes on to fill us with new dreams, new goals, and new desires that are pleasing to God and profitable for us. Distant hearts draw near, cold hearts grow warm, and hard hearts soften, all because of "the expulsive power of a new affection."

There is a lot of talk these days about changing behavior by the sheer power of the will. Sure, we can change behavior for a season. If you want to lose weight, exercise and eat healthy foods. If you want less month at the end of the money, become a better financial steward. If you want a better marriage, go to a marriage conference. The human will is remarkable in its ability to do just about anything . . . for a season. But lasting change never comes through the power generated by the human will. WILL SIMPLY HAS NO LASTING POWER!

Change wrought by the will is nothing more than behavior modification. True heart transformation only takes place by the power of the Holy Spirit through the deepening understanding of the gospel. The more we preach the gospel to ourselves, the deeper God will drive gospel "DNA" into every area of our lives. Bryan Chapell writes, "While we can will a change in behavior, we do not by an act of will change what we find attractive, appealing, and lovely. The Spirit accomplishes what willpower cannot in reconstructing the affections of our hearts."³

Jesus confirms the truth of "the expulsive power of a new affection" in His final instructions to His disciples prior to His Ascension: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

THE PROMISE

Jesus was telling His disciples then— and His disciples today—that the power of a new affection is promised in the person and work of the third person of the Trinity, The Holy Spirit. This was not the first time Jesus had delivered this promise to His disciples.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:15-17, 25-26)

Jesus said it was necessary for Him to depart for the coming of the promised Helper. The sending of the Holy Spirit is what Theologians call the fruit of the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a remarkable promise of great comfort to every disciple in every age. We will never be alone here on earth. Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to comfort and convict, teach and train, defend and deliver. As our Guide, the Holy Spirit leads us into total truth that informs the mind, enflames the heart, and conforms the will. Every good gift and godly grace of the Holy Spirit is now ours because of our union in Christ. So, whatever we are going through, we are not going through it alone. We have the personal presence of the Holy Spirit to lead us through every season of life.

THE PURPOSE

The purpose of the power to create this new affection is found in one word: witnesses! We are to be witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ. What is a witness? First and foremost, being a witness for Christ is more than handing out Gospel tracts, banging people over the head with your Bible, and tracking how many professions of faith you have accumulated—as I once believed it was. In the context in which Jesus was speaking, one is a witness as a result of the working of the Holy Spirit. It is *never* dependent upon man's will or work. Remember, when it comes to will-power, will has no power as it

relates to heart transformation. To be sure, some of our sinful compulsions can be redirected by the sheer power of the will for a season, but the root of our unrighteousness still exists and, in fact, has grown more deeply rooted into the soil of our lives.

Inside of every child of God, the Holy Spirit has taken up residency, and it is the Holy Spirit that witnesses for Jesus through the person who has been saved by grace. We are the conduits, or the vehicles, through which the Holy Spirit works and witnesses. The purpose can be summed up in this statement: ***empty of self and full of the Spirit***. The command given in Ephesians 5:18 comes to mind here: “Be filled with the Spirit.” You simply cannot be filled with both the self and the Spirit. One has to make room for the other. If we cannot serve both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24), we cannot be filled with both the self and the Spirit! So which one is it for you? What does the confession of your life say today?

The Holy Spirit goes to work on our sinful, selfish, and self-centered natures by emptying us of the love of self and filling us with the love of the Savior. The more we love Jesus, the more we will be like Jesus and the better we will witness for Him.

We will examine the spiritual disciplines (the means of grace) in upcoming chapters. We’ll discuss the importance of their consistent application in our lives if we are to be conformed into the image of Christ. But never forget, the church is filled with countless individuals who are actively engaged in these spiritual disciplines, but with a motivation that springs from cold hearts that are distant from Jesus. They have never set their affections on Christ, but rather have created a “to-do list,” drawn from what they believe to be the duties of being a Christian. They are living a Christ-less Christianity. Duty without devotion is devoid of love. And, as John bluntly asserted, “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8-9).

Thomas Chalmers built his sermon on the truth of Scripture, which teaches that transformation is infinitely more a result of what our hearts love than what our hands do. What we do is important and a necessary part of growing up into Christ . . . but the foundation upon which a godly life is built is a heart that is growing in its affection for Christ. The affection of the Gospel grows from the compelling power the Holy Spirit infuses into our hearts, leading to a life of total transformation.

1. Thomas Childers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*, Sermon text on www.theologynetwork.org
2. Thomas Childers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*, Sermon text on www.theologynetwork.org



BROTHER TO BROTHER

1. Misplaced affections need to be replaced by the far greater power of the affection of the gospel.
 Agree Disagree Please explain

2. Why is a new affection more successful in replacing an old affection than simply trying to end it without supplanting it with something better?

3. Do you have any current “affections” that need to be replaced by something better?

4. What do you need to do to replace them? What will it cost you if you don’t?

5. Why is living the Christian life so much more than keeping a particular set of rules and engaging in certain activities?

6. Let’s close out today’s discussion by repeating a challenge from today’s reading. “If we cannot serve both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24), we cannot be filled with both the self and the Spirit. So which one is it for you? What does the confession of your life say today?”
