

The Believer and the Creation

Mark 10: 1-12; Mark 16: 15-20; Rom. 8: 18-25; Rev. 4: 8-11.

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I think we might examine our links with the creation in the light of these Scriptures. James speaks of us as men, being a kind of first-fruits of His creation. One has wondered whether it would not be a salutary matter to consider whether alignment in relation to God's thoughts in creation is with us. Generally speaking things are awry and out of alignment; the danger is of our affections being caught by it. It is not suggested that this line of things is to take precedence in our hearts over the thought of new creation, what we have been brought to as in Christ, but I feel that we should move in our spheres of responsibility with more pleasure to God if our position as men here was really understood.

In the first Scripture we might see that any feature of compromise is foreign to God. The thought of God in relation to His creature is that their affections should be maintained in relation to himself and not influenced by circumstances which would bring in compromise. One is not thinking specifically of the institution of marriage, but rather that the verse would indicate to us that man's affections are to be held directly in relation to God. That would give us power to move in testimony to the creation and would help us according to Romans in our feelings with it in relation to what has come in. What balks us in our feelings and renders them less sensitive is the introduction of compromise, whereas, if hardness of heart was not with us, there would be a clearer testimony and more sensitive feelings, and that would make room for us to have our present place in the volume of praise that ascends to God as the Creator. It is a very significant fact that God is not only to be praised in connection with redemption glory, as Revelation 5 brings in, but He is to be praised, and should be praised, in connection with what is creatorial; and I understand we are to have our part in that. There is surely no mead of praise ascending to God that the saints in the light and gain of the Spirit's day should not have part in.

It is a very striking and solemn thing that there are several references in this gospel to the question of man's heart being hardened. That in itself is serious enough, but when it is considered that some of these references are in relation to believers, it would make the matter more urgent and more serious still. What a challenge to us and how it pulls us up and gives us to examine our position as to whether this question of hardness of heart has crept into our affections, because that will distort things.

Mark reaches in the first verse a most blessed point; he reaches the thought of the Son of God immediately. I wondered whether the revelation that God has made of Himself in His Son, in all the affections, all the intimacy, all the graciousness, dignity and preciousness that attend such a revelation, received into the soul in power would not hold our affections in tenderness.

In the Son of God you have One here (one would speak reverently of Him and carefully, too) Who in every thought, in every movement and every expression was in perfect alignment with the thoughts and heart of God.

Whatever may be the relationships man enters into down here, in his circumstances, it is essential that in his affections he should be maintained in direct touch with God Himself, and held as to what he may touch in relation to God. It is obvious from this Scripture that man's own self-gratification was more to him than his links with God. God was forgotten and self-gratification was foremost in the heart. That seems to be the general position of man; that God is forgotten.

The love of self-gratification, self-will, and self-pleasing is prominent, and we are challenged as to whether this principle is encroaching upon our affections.

Long before the truth of sonship was made known (we know it was in the heart of God eternally) He takes up men as creatures, and from them as creatures He rightly expects pleasure; and I suggest from this Scripture that a pathway of self-gratification and self-will, a pathway of compromise, ordered by circumstances, is not pleasurable to God. Whatever the circumstances are, whatever may have come in through failure, the original thought is that the affections of the creature are to be held in response to God. Then even the greatest blessing that can be given to man, the institution of marriage, is to be held, not as man's self-gratification but in direct touch with the God from Whom it sprang. It involves great refinement and an entirely opposite viewpoint from that which obtains in the world.

We can see the importance of our affections being in touch with God in a right and true way in relation to what is developed here because Paul's writings make it manifest that God's great thought in the institution of marriage was Christ and the church. So that whilst on the surface this may seem elementary, it underlines in a very special way what is spiritual.

The first moral question taken up in Romans is that man's affection has become so estranged from God that the creature has become more to him than the Creator. That is what was happening here. The institution was becoming more to the person than the pleasure of God Who instituted it.

The epistle to the Romans is for the adjustment of moral matters according to the declared righteousness of God. That is the standard, the basis. The declaration of the righteous claims of God is made, and every moral matter is taken up and adjusted in relation to that; and behind it all is the pent-up desire to reveal the truth of the mystery as the last few verses show. But we cannot come into the enjoyment of the mystery if moral matters are outstanding.

This would help us in our gospel movements. What clear testimony there would be if we were preserved in our affections from every feature of compromise. Nothing weakens any position more. Men are finding it out nationally and internationally. Compromise seems to be the one way out for the thoughts of men who have become diverted from God, but a Christian has no power in testimony if he is marked by compromise. Let a young man or a young girl compromise himself or herself in his or her movements in the shop or office or schoolroom, and what testimony has he or she in relation to the gospel? Because conditions have altered and circumstances are more testing, I am not to introduce some lower standard than God has brought in. Why should I? Can I experience the support of God in it?

The writer in the end of Ecclesiastes says, "Let us hear the end of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole of man" (New Trans.).

The great burden of Paul's ministry was to espouse the saints as a chaste virgin to Christ. The Corinthians in the hardness of their hearts were bringing in compromise. They were not grieving over affections that had become alienated from God. The great sin at Corinth was that the affections of the saints did not feel things. "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned," (1 Cor. 5: 2). That was the great sin there; that there could be this desertion from what was due to God in the assembly and the saints did not feel it. I believe careful consideration of these verses in mark would give us right feelings, and we should feel matters that come in which are wrong in relation to God. That would make way for the introduction of the wonderful unveilings of love in relation to Christ and the church.

Long before there is compromise of action over matters, something has gone wrong in our hearts. Nothing will keep us so tender in our affections as often considering the sufferings of Christ. Let us sit

down, not in any sentimental way, but in true spiritual attraction, to look at what took place at Calvary — that will maintain tender hearts with us, for the only way man could be brought back to God to do His pleasure was through the death of Christ. There was no compromise with the Lord in the wilderness. He falls back on the Word of God. There was no compromise at Calvary. None at all. Thank God there was not.

The facing of these matters in the light of the death of Christ, and the feeding upon His sufferings during the week, would produce a great response and affection for Christ as we come together for the Supper, and that would produce the atmosphere for the going out of the gospel. I feel the importance of being able to stand up in any part of the creation and announce the blessedness of the goodness of God as my own heart is sensitive in relation to it. If I am keeping back any part of my affections from the shining of the love of God, in measure that will affect my testimony.

In Romans 8 there would be more ability to groan intelligently if our affections were right and not hardened. Creation itself is groaning under pressure. I suppose there never was a time when the creation was groaning under such pressure as today. The word used in relation to the groaning is the same word as used of the Lord in the Gospel we have been reading. It says, "and looking up to heaven He groaned," (Mark 7: 34). I suppose a good deal of the groaning with us is what we should speak of as "looking **downward**" groaning. We would like to know a little more the "looking **upward**" groaning in relation to God, as we take account of how the creation has slipped away from the thoughts of God. Not merely feeling things because of the pressure, but because of the way in which the heart of God is involved in it.

What underlies Romans 8 is that we know God and we love Him. It is not merely that God loves us, but our affections are with Him and we love God. Our affections are in line with Him.

As loving God we know even in relation to creatorial matters, that all things work together for good. What an incentive to have our affections right with God; that we should know that all things work together for good, and to have our **present** intelligent part in the praise that will eventually rise to Him from all creation.