

# Instructions About Heart-work

## Lesson 14 — Governing the heart, Part 9

- I. The 3d thing necessary in governing the heart is **to exercise our affections upon proper objects and in due measure**. \*In a practical sense this means, for example: *loving* only what we should love and as much and no more than we should love it; *fearing* only what we should fear and as much and no more than we should fear it; *desiring* only what we should desire and as much and no more than we should desire it; *being angry* with only what we should be angry and as much and more than we should be angry with it, etc. These are the affections, the passions, which we should consider: our love, our desire, our joy, our grief, our fear, and our anger.

### II. Our Love

- A. *The object of our love* is to be that which is good and only that which is good. We're not to love anything than is not good.
1. God is the chief and supreme good, the fountain of all goodness, infinitely good (Ps 119.68), and should therefore be the most loved. In fact, our danger here is not of overloving but of underloving. God is to be loved with all the heart, all the mind, all the soul, and all the strength (Mk 12.30). There's no danger here of excess. We cannot love God too much.
  2. Our souls and bodies are good, for we are God's workmanship (Eph 2.10; Gen 1.31). Our wellbeing and the prosperity of our bodies and souls are good (3Jn 2). God's creation is good (1Tim 4.4). The prosperity of our neighbors and brethren is good (Ex 20.15).
    - a) But we're in danger of not loving our soul as we should—as having a greater value than the whole world! (Mk 8.36-37) and of not seeking its good as we should—begin willing to lose everything to do it good (Mk 8.35).
    - b) And we're in danger of overloving our body—more than we should, more than it's worth, 1Tim 4.8; Phil 3.19; Mt 6.25
  3. This is the **order** that should be in a well-governed heart: we should love the creation, for our body's sake; we should love our body, for our soul's sake; we should love it all for God's sake; and we should love God for Himself.
  4. And this ought to be the **measure** of our love: we should love God with all our might; we should love our soul as far as it serves the honor of God; we should love our body, our health, our outward prosperity, as far as they're serviceable to our soul's welfare; and we should love the things of creation as far as they're useful to our body in the service of our soul and to our body and soul in the service of God.
- B. And so *this, then*, is a well-governed heart: a heart that's set right in its love, a heart which loves only what it should love, in the right order, and no more than it should love it. And this, then, is the cause of so much disorder in our lives: the disorder of our love.
1. What's wrong with us when we seek outward prosperity more than soul prosperity? When we seek riches, pleasures, ease, and money more than we seek grace and holiness? Is it not that our love is disordered? We love the creation too much and God and our souls too little.
  2. Sinful man blinded by his love of this world finds no greater joy than when his grain and wine abound, Ps 4.6-7. Those who refuse to follow Christ do so because it'll cost them the world, their chief pleasure and treasure, Mk 10.22; 1Jn 2.15-16.
  3. A heart can be plumbed by taking into account what it loves. What is your heart's greatest pleasure? When are you most happy, satisfied, and contented? When are things

just as you would have them, just as you would order them if you could? This will tell you the health of your heart.

4. God should be loved first, our souls next, then our bodies, and lastly the things of creation. This is the order and measure which we should desire and strife for.

C. Consider the necessity of ordering our love.

1. The right ordering of all our other affections depends upon the right order and measure of our love. If we *love what* we should love, we will *hate* what we should hate, and *fear* what we should fear, and *desire* what we should desire, and *grieve* for what we should grieve, and *be angry* only at what we should be angry; and when there is a right measure in our love, where we *love* as much as we should, then we will *hate* as much as we should, and *fear*, and *grieve*, and *rejoice* as much as we should, and no more.
2. The motions and workings of all our affections follow and flow from the working of our love, which is why our Lord calls **this** the great and first Commandment: *to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength*; because if God is first and most in our life, all of life will be properly ordered under Him. So that if we love God, we will hate, fear, and grieve all that's contrary to God; and when we love God as much as we should, we'll desire Him above all and hate and grieve for sin with all our hearts.
3. This means the reason we don't hate sin as we should, and don't fear sin as we should, and grieve for sin as we should—the reason we desire no more of God, no more grace, no more holiness, is because we have no more love for God than we do. And the reason we love what we should not and desire what we should not, is because we don't love God as we should. Only more love for God can help and heal our inordinate passions.
4. It's what Thomas Chalmers called *the expulsive power of a new affection*. Nothing will drive out forbidden affections and nothing will order disordered and inordinate affections but the expulsive power of a love for God. A right love for God, an abounding and ardent love for God can alone put an end to all our hardness of heart, all our worldliness, all our distempered passions.

D. As we examine ourselves for the order and measure of our love, let us remember these things:

1. God has promised to put so great a fear/love for Him in our hearts that we'll never depart from Him, Jer 32.40. Therefore let us pray for this promise to be fulfilled in us.
2. Christ knew the love of the Ephesians had waned and called them to recover it by repenting and doing the first works again, Rev 2.4-5. Therefore let us learn that however cold our love for God has become, if we repent and return to Christ, He will warm our hearts again. Humble repentance will always restore the embers to a flame.
3. Love for God is a grace, or gift, of God and like all graces will wither and decline if neglected but will grow and increase by cultivation, 2Tim 1.6; 2Pet 3.18; Heb 10.24. Therefore let us make every effort to stir up and cultivate our love for God, making sure effort to slay all rivals for our affection, lest we be divided and double-minded, Mt 6.24.
4. We often picture a cold God sternly demanding our obedience, as if he cared for nothing but our dutiful service. But the truth is, God asks for our heart (Prov 23.26) and desires nothing so much as our love. In fact, He asks for *nothing* in return for His costly and lavish love for us but that we love Him in return. For He knows that if He but has our heart, all our heart, then we'll freely give Him all else and, likewise, He can most successfully give us all that He has to give us. Therefore let us see that we intentionally withdraw our love from all other rivals whatsoever and give our hearts to God, that He might be our love and our delight and our portion forever, Ps 73.25-26.