

The Source of Our Affections

The significance of affections

Affections and source

The bride revealed in the Book of Revelation is described as “the wife of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:9). This identification expresses *the intimate love* relationship Christ has with His church. The church identified as the body expresses *life*. The church identified as a building expresses God’s *dwelling place*. The church identified as branches in the Vine expresses *fruitfulness*. There are many different ways the church is identified, but the final identification of the church in the Bible is *the bride*. Ultimately, the peak of God’s work over His people is a bride characterized by a pure and intimate love (Rev. 22:17), a bride filled with affections for her Bridegroom (John 3:29-30). This revelation causes us to pay close attention to the place affections have in our experience of the Lord. The preparation of the bride highlights the significance of bridal affections.

Indeed, when the Lord was asked what is the great commandment in the law, He answered in Matthew 22:37-38 with words that focus on our affections: ³⁷ “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with *all your heart*, with *all your soul*, and with *all your mind*.’” ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.” Thus, the supreme place for the love of God to be found is in our affections. Heart, soul, and mind summarize the totality of our affections. God’s love needs a place for expression. That place designated by God is our affections with our heart, soul, and mind. The affections of our heart is where Christ desires to make home in us (Eph. 3:17). The affections of our heart is what directs us (Matt. 6:21-23), and the affections of our heart is what flows out of us in worship and praise to God (Eph. 5:18-19).

The main thing in understanding affections is to see that affections have a source. Affections do not exist in a vacuum; affections proceed from a source. What source we live by will determine the kind of affections we have. Before we are saved we only have one source – *the flesh* (John 3:6a; Rom. 8:8). From that source proceeds the works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21). The flesh produces corrupt affections (Gal. 6:8a). However, the moment we are saved and Christ comes to live in us, we then have two sources. The new source is *the spirit* (John 3:6b). From this source proceeds the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The Spirit produces bridal affections (Gal. 6:8b). Now, day by day we are learning to make choices that sow unto the Spirit in order to reap the affections proceeding from the life of God.

It is no wonder that the Bible has so much to say about living and walking according to Spirit (Rom. 8:4-6; Gal. 5:25). There is no other source for my being. I have a mind, I have feelings, I have a will. I have to say to this mind, emotion, and will, “You are not my source. I have *another* source for my life. Mind! – you have a source. Don’t forget that. Feelings! – you have a source. Don’t forget that. Will! – you have a source. Don’t forget that.”

God Himself becoming incarnated in Christ (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3) and becoming a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45) joined to our spirit (1 Cor. 6:17) is now and forever our source. This is where we touch, where we call, where we drink, where we interact, where we draw from to be a person having transactions with God in the Spirit. For example, we see something in ourselves so poor, so contrary, so rebellious, so corrupt in our affections, and

IN THIS ISSUE:

- The Source of Our Affections
— Pages 1-4
- Multiple copies of this issue may be obtained @ \$.25 per copy at **MOW**
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knowing that at the same time we are not the source to change our condition. What do we do? How do we handle our contrary self?

In the middle of many conflicting thoughts and scattered emotions, we need a point of reference — something solid we can lay hold of. At that moment we need to call upon His name to have a fresh transaction with our source. Not as Isaiah 64:7, says, “And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You.” Calling upon the name of the Lord stirs us up to take hold of our source. We need a Spirit-transaction with the words of Ezekiel 36:26-27: ²⁶“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and *cause you* to walk in My statutes, and *you will keep* My judgments and *do* them.” Interaction with the realm of the Spirit will usher us into the source of bridal affections. It’s a place of rest where God is doing the work to take away our stony heart and cause us to walk in His way. Bridal affections come from many Spirit-transactions day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

The way bridal affections are produced becomes of major consequence. And many times it takes a long time — over one thing — two things — or a hundred things — to learn that *we are not* the source. He is the source. So instead of striving with our failing self, we need to double our enjoyment of drawing near to God and being supplied from the source of the God of all grace.

The anatomy of affections

To thoroughly understand the nature of our affections we need to consider the various aspects of affections. In other words, examine the anatomy of affections. In the New Testament there are a few Greek words that are used to convey the thought of *affections*. One of the primary words is *phronema* (φρόνημα), usually translated “mind,” or “minding.” However, this New Testament word, according to the Greek lexicons, must include two additional thoughts — 1) *phronema* includes not only the mind, but the combination of *mind, emotion, and will*. 2) *Phronema* also signifies the *inclination, bent, and direction of the mind, emotion, and will* — that is, the attitude and affections of the heart.

A literal English translation of this word in its verbal and noun forms is found in Romans 8:5-6: ⁵ “For those who live according to the flesh *set their minds* on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the *mind* of the flesh is death, but the *mind* of the Spirit is life and peace.” The old *King James Version* translates it, “To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Many other English translations have attempted to capture this thought in different ways. The *American*

Standard Version translates verse 6, “For the *mind* of the flesh is death; but the *mind* of the Spirit is life and peace.” The *Concordant Literal New Testament* translates it, “For the *disposition* of the flesh is death, yet the *disposition* of the spirit is life and peace.” The *Emphasized Bible* by Rotherham translates the same verse, “For *what is preferred* by the flesh is death, whereas *what is preferred* by the spirit is life and peace.” The embedded translation in the *ICC Commentary* by Sanday and Headlam seeks to bring out the rich thoughts in Romans 8:5-6:

⁵ “These two modes of life [flesh and Spirit] are directly opposed to one another. If any man gives way to the gratifications of sense, then these and nothing else occupy his thoughts and determine the bent of his character. And on the other hand, those who let the Holy Spirit guide them fix their thoughts and affections on things spiritual. ⁶ They are opposed in their nature; they are opposed also in their consequences. For the consequence of having one’s bent towards the things of the flesh is death—both of soul and body, both here and hereafter, just as to surrender one’s thoughts and motives to the Spirit brings with it a quickened vitality through the whole man, and a tranquillizing sense of reconciliation with God.”

All of the above translations attempt to capture the depth of the Greek word *phronema* used by Paul. In summary, *phronema* means the *inclination, bent and direction of the mind, emotion, and will*. Or, in other words, it refers to the *tendency* of all the faculties of our heart and soul. It was this kind of experience that deeply touched me when I first became a Christian. When my spirit was regenerated my heart and tendencies spontaneously changed. I preferred reading the Bible to other things. I knew what happened to me was real because inwardly my tendencies and affections were different, in new directions.

Determining our tendencies and affections

“Tendency” indicates an *inherent proneness* for a particular kind of thought or action. This is exactly what happens to us when the faculties of our hearts find their source — the Spirit. We find an inherent proneness in our being toward the things of God. With this understanding of the Greek word, Romans 8:5 can be literally translated, “For those who are according to the flesh find their tendencies on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the spirit find their tendencies on the things of the Spirit.” If our source is according to the flesh, we will find a proneness and tendency toward the things of the flesh. If on the other hand, our source is according to the spirit we will find a proneness and tendency toward the things of the Spirit. In other words, it is our source that

determines our tendency and affections. Thus, the kind of tendencies and affections that dominate us are basically symptoms of what source our being is according to—flesh or Spirit. Since *after* regeneration we have two sources, it makes a big difference what source we choose to live by.

For example, if I'm a believer who is according to the flesh most of my days, weeks, and months, and if I'm a person neglectful to spend time in fellowship with the Lord, then I, by choice, am reproducing the tendencies of independence from God in my living and relationships. What is our inner being according to? Where is our heart's treasure in daily life? This will determine the kind of tendencies and affections we have.

Consider another example — you wake up in the morning, and the first thing in your heart is, "God, today You're my source. You're my supply. Be my life today." You make a choice to open yourself to the Lord. That choice becomes a Spirit-transaction while waking up in the morning. You may even find yourself beginning to sing, "In the morning when I rise, in the morning when I rise . . . give me Jesus!" Just think about it — your openness and choice connected you with the willingness of the spirit (Matt. 26:41), which in turn began to determine for the day the tendencies and affections of your heart.

Or, another example — you get hit broadside with a thought, with a reasoning, with something that seems to take your mind way down the street before you even have a chance to get out of bed. When that happens, you find yourself in the midst of the battle that Paul speaks of in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." Now, what do you do? Again, you have a source to handle these kind of battles — 2 Chronicles 20:15 says, "The battle is not yours, but God's." You can honestly acknowledge the tendency of that "other source" by singing, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love," and at the same time not identify yourself with that crucified realm (Gal. 5:24-25). Don't fight, feed, or indulge the crucified realm. Leave it in oblivion. You don't owe anything to it (Rom. 8:12). Simply turn your heart and call His name, "Jesus!" Say, "Thank You that You're my source, not these thoughts and reasonings." Don't walk around it trying to figure it out. It will just breed more tendencies of anxiety and despair. Have a Spirit-transaction with your battle and you will trigger the tendencies and affections of the Spirit. It is with these kind of transactions that the bride becomes the bride!

Spirit-transactions in Romans 8

Knowing that the source of bridal affections is derived from the Spirit, and knowing that to be a person according to spirit is the way affections are produced, it is

important to carefully consider the Spirit-transactions revealed in Romans 8. An overall list of these various transactions are as follows: the law of the Spirit freeing v.2, walking v. 4, having our being v.5, minding vv.5-6, dwelling vv. 9, 11, having v.9, giving life v. 11, indwelling v.11, cooperating v.13, leading v.14, crying v.15, witnessing v.16, groaning vv. 23, 26; loving v.28, and overcoming vv. 31-39. Every kind of Spirit-transaction will produce the tendencies of the Spirit. It is in these tendencies that we find the affections of the bride.

These affections will manifest themselves in our heart, our inclinations, our bents, our bias (in a good sense), and even in the impulses of our mind, emotion, and will. When we have interaction and transactions with the Spirit — walking in Spirit, not carrying out those lusts, keeping in step with the Spirit, being filled in spirit, singing, opening your mouth, by the Spirit putting to death, transactions of the Spirit — it is these transactions that transform and infuse our whole being with another set of affections. So it is very simple, the way to enjoy bridal affections is to enjoy transaction after transaction in the realm of the Spirit.

This is why we have a daily life. This is why we have a life spending time with the Lord. This is why we are turning our hearts. This is why we have a meeting life, why we have a fellowshiping life, why we have a serving life. All of what God has given to us in our daily life is simply that we could have transactions in Spirit. And when we do, our affections are touched. Our heart is touched. The loves and preferences of our heart are changed.

Just be according to spirit, whatever that means. If it is a song in the hymnal, if it is a verse, if it is the saints, if it is a phone call, if it is a decision to come to the meeting or to the brothers and sisters, or whatever it means. Those that are according to spirit are producing in themselves the mind of the Spirit, the affections of the Spirit, the affections that are the bridal affections. So the source of affections is a day by day dynamic experience whereby we are having transactions in the realm of the Spirit.

The basic transaction in Spirit

The basic Spirit-transaction in all of our lives is related to the practices of our body. This is seen in Romans 8:13 where Paul says, "For if you live according to the flesh, you must die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." These practices of the body are the autonomous, independent, and habitual habits of the soulish body (1 Cor. 15:44), that is, the kind of soulish patterns that have been built-up through the course of our whole life. We have been independent. We have lived by our soul. We have lived by our own thought, our own emotion, and our own will. We have lived by the self as our source. Living by that source has resulted in

practices, habits, and a living that is independent of God.

But now, in Romans 8, the chapter that speaks about being according to Spirit, you start minding the things of the Spirit. You get the tendencies of the Spirit. In that very chapter you come to the basic transaction of the Spirit in verse 13 — “If *by* the Spirit.” This phrase tells me there is a transaction that is to take place — something is going to happen “by the Spirit.” But, before Paul comes to the basic Spirit-transaction in Romans 8:13, he first unveils a big build up, a huge build up in Romans 8:11, “And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.” Look how he describes Who is in us and how He dwells in us. It is “the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from dead.” The One who broke through death, broke through the powers of darkness, “dwells in you.” And “He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life.” That is impartation now. That is imparting affections. That is imparting the bridal affections.

That Spirit will “give life to your mortal bodies,” not to your immortal. This is not after we die. This is right now — “will give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who *indwells* you” (v.11b). Now *indwells* is a stronger word for *dwells* here. It is not the first *dwells* that is in verse 11 at the beginning of the verse. This is an additional word and it is a compound of that first one. It means through His Spirit who saturates you, and who is flowing in you, because you are interacting and there is a transaction that is going on. Your thoughts are buzzing, and at the same time you are interrupting. You are counteracting. You are calling, “Jesus.” Now my goal is not that I’m going to be able to change my tendencies — Oh, foolish man! The flesh doesn’t change. Those tendencies, left without the Spirit, are going to be the same tendencies ten years from now that they are today.

So what we need to see is that God’s way is counteraction. Like counteracting light that comes into a dark room when the darkness is there. The tendency of darkness is there, its very tendency is present. But when the light is on, then that tendency is overcome. Once the light goes on, darkness doesn’t *go away* and become extinct, rather, it is *overcome* by something that counteracts it. We are just in another realm. One realm (light) overcomes another realm (darkness). So, don’t be spoofed, threatened, and intimidated by that tendency to darkness. Counteract it with the Spirit and light. No wonder Paul said, “There is now then no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus,” because he just got through talking about the sin-tendency in Romans 7 with the “I”, the “I”, the “I”, and the tendencies that come with that.

Now the decks are cleared with no condemnation. God has made a way for us, even in the presence of our enemies. Like it says in the Psalm 23, “He has spread a table before us in the presence of our enemies.” In the presence of darkness, there is a counteracting law — this is the saturating Spirit that we are having transactions with.

He *gives life* to our mortal bodies.

Then Romans 8:12 says, “So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh.” You don’t owe anything to that realm. You don’t need to answer to the flesh. You just say, “Jesus is Lord here!” Declare something with your mouth and touch the Spirit and have a transaction with the Spirit. Paul says it in that way. That is really down to earth. We are not debtors. We don’t owe anything to the flesh, not only the evil flesh, the bad flesh, but the good flesh, the religious flesh. There are different aspects to the flesh.

To counter this, Romans 8:13 tells us the results of the Spirit-transaction, “For if you live according to the flesh,” literally, “you must die.” Or, “you are about to die.” “But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices, the habits, the independence of the body, you will live.” Then verse 14 explains verse 13, “For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” This verse oftentimes is taken out of context, by itself. The principle of being led by the Spirit is fine — led to go here and there, led to do this or that. But in verse 14, the leading of the Spirit is when by the Spirit we put to death the independent, autonomous practices of the body. It’s when we say, “Lord Jesus” in the middle of a practice of the body. We interrupt the practice by calling upon His name.

When we “by the Spirit put to death the practices of the body, we live.” We live with that life that He imparts to us and those affections that come with that life. So it is a matter here of touching the source of affections — the Spirit — but the Spirit with practical transactions.

When we have transactions with the Spirit, there is an interpenetration of the affections of the Godhead that come to our mind, emotion and will. It is in the transactions with the Spirit that interpenetration happens. That means there is an impartation of life. This is how this life works — by transactions with the Spirit. Thus, the source of our affections is found in our daily Spirit-transactions.

— Bill Freeman

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