



Affections

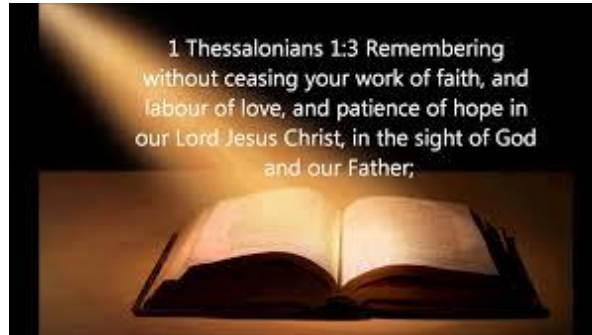
Set Your Affections on God

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Forward



We must set our mind on things above and not on the earth.

Jesus says that God's plan is not to take Christians out of this world, but rather, to send them into the world (vs. 15, 18).

How can a Christian live in this world with its responsibilities and temptations without loving this world and being conformed to its values? The tension of this situation is addressed throughout the Bible.

Our citizenship is in heaven.

Phil. 3:20 -- "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Timothy 2:4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

1 John 2:15-17 Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world.

As we study these Scriptures, let us ask ourselves, "Where have we set our affection"?

Chapter 1



You are restrained from you own affections.

2 Corinthians 6:12

You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.

The Corinthians were reacting coldly to Paul's words, but Paul explained that his harsh words came from his love for them. It is easy to react against those whom God has placed over us in leadership, rather than to accept their exhortations as a sign of their love for us. We need an open rather than a closed heart toward God's messengers.

Set your mind on things above.

Colossians 3:2

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Setting our hearts on things above means striving to put heaven's priorities into daily practice. Setting our minds on things above means concentrating on the eternal rather than the temporal. See Phil. 4:9 and Col. 3:15 for more on Christ's rule in our hearts and minds.

3:2-3 “For you died” means that we should have as little desire for this world as a dead person would have. The Christian’s real home is where Christ lives (John 14:2-3). This truth gives us a different perspective on our lives here on earth. To “set your minds on things above” means to look at life from God’s perspective and to seek what he desires. This is the antidote to materialism; we gain the proper perspective on material goods when we take God’s view of them.

The more we regard the world around us as God does, the more we will live in harmony with him. We must not become too attached to what is only temporary.

What does it mean that a believer’s life is “hidden with Christ”? *Hidden* means concealed and safe. This is not only a future hope, but an accomplished fact right now. Our service and conduct do not earn our salvation, but they are results of our salvation. Take heart that your salvation is sure, and live each day for Christ.

Degrading passions

Romans 1:26

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

God’s plan for natural sexual relationships is his ideal for his creation. Unfortunately, sin distorts the natural use of God’s gifts. Sin often means not only denying God, but also denying the way we are made. When people say that any sex act is acceptable as long as nobody gets hurt, they are fooling themselves. In the long run (and often in the short run), sin hurts people—individuals, families, whole societies. How sad it is that people who worship the things God made instead of the Creator so often distort and destroy the very things they claim to value!

Homosexuality (to exchange or abandon natural relations of sex) was as widespread in Paul’s day as it is in ours. Many pagan practices encouraged it.

God is willing to receive anyone who comes to him in faith, and Christians should love and accept others no matter what their background. Yet, homosexuality is strictly forbidden in Scripture (Leviticus 18:22).

Homosexuality is considered an acceptable practice by many in our world today—even by some churches. But society does not set the standard for God’s law. Many homosexuals believe that their desires are normal and that they have a right to express them. But God does not obligate nor encourage us to fulfill all our desires (even normal ones).

Those desires that violate God’s laws must be controlled.

If you have these desires, you can and must resist acting upon them. Consciously avoid places or activities you know will kindle temptations of this kind. Don’t underestimate the power of Satan to tempt you, nor the potential for serious harm if you yield to these temptations. Remember, God can and will forgive sexual sins just as he forgives other sins.

Surrender yourself to the grace and mercy of God, asking him to show you the way out of sin and into the light of his freedom and his love. Prayer, Bible study, and strong support in a Christian church can help you to gain strength to resist these powerful temptations. If you are already deeply involved in homosexual behavior, seek help from a trustworthy, professional, pastoral counselor.

I long for you with my affections set on Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:8

For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Have you ever longed to see a friend with whom you share fond memories? Paul had such a longing to see the Christians at Philippi. His love and affection for them was based not merely on past experiences, but also on the unity that comes when believers draw upon Christ’s love.

All Christians are part of God's family and thus share equally in the transforming power of his love. Do you feel a deep love for fellow Christians, friends and strangers alike? Let Christ's love motivate you to love other Christians and to express that love in your actions toward them.

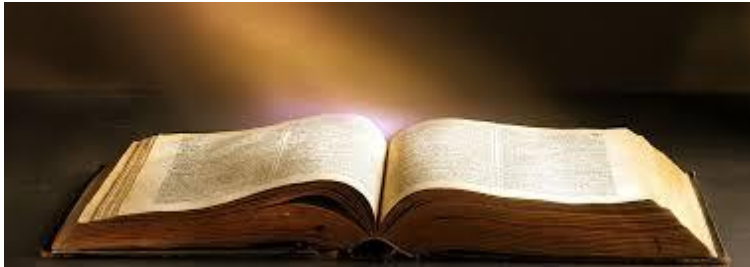
Affection for God's People

Psalm 16:3

As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.

The Lord shows great delight in his children whom he loves.

Chapter 2



Choose affection toward God.

Colossians 3:5

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Affection, Expressing

We should consider ourselves dead and unresponsive to sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed. Just like diseased limbs of a tree, these practices must be cut off before they destroy us.

We must make a conscious, daily decision to remove anything that supports or feeds these desires and to rely on the Holy Spirit's power.

Affection, For God's Word

Psalm 119:47-48

I shall delight in your commandments, which I love.

The psalmist talks about keeping the laws and yet being free. Contrary to what we often expect, obeying God's laws does not inhibit or restrain us. Instead it frees us to be what God designed us to be. By seeking God's salvation and forgiveness, we

have freedom from sin and the resulting oppressive guilt. By living God's way, we have freedom to fulfill God's plan for our lives.

Kinds Of affections

Romans 1:31

Without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

How were these people aware of God's death penalty? Human beings, created in God's image, have a basic moral nature and a conscience. This truth is understood beyond religious circles. Psychologists, for example, say that the rare person who has no conscience has a serious personality disorder that is extremely difficult to treat.

Most people instinctively know when they do wrong—but they may not care. Some people will even risk an early death for the freedom to indulge their desires now. "I know it's wrong, but I really want it," they say; or, "I know it's dangerous, but it's worth the risk." For such people, part of the "fun" is going against God's law, the community's moral standards, common sense, or their own sense of right and wrong. But deep down inside they know that sin deserves the punishment of death (Romans 6:23).

Even if the government legalizes sin, that does not make it legal in eyes of God.

Chapter 3



Show God's love to others.

Romans 12:10

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

We can honor others in one of two ways. One involves ulterior motives. We honor our bosses so they will reward us, our employees so they will work harder, the wealthy so they will contribute to our cause, the powerful so they will use their power for us and not against us.

God's other way involves love. As Christians, we honor people because they have been created in God's image, because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and because they have a unique contribution to make to Christ's church.

Does God's way of honoring others sound too difficult for your competitive nature? Why not try to outdo one another in showing honor? Put others first!

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh.

Galatians 5:24

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

In order to accept Christ as Savior, we need to turn from our sins and willingly nail our sinful nature to the cross. This doesn't mean, however, that we will never see traces of its evil desires again. As Christians we still have the capacity to sin, but we have been set free from sin's power over us and no longer have to give in to it.

We must daily commit our sinful tendencies to God's control, daily crucify them, and moment by moment draw on the Spirit's power to overcome them (see Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14).

Show godliness and brotherly kindness.

2 Peter 1:7

And in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

Faith must be more than belief in certain facts; it must result in action, growth in Christian character, and the practice of moral discipline, or it will die away (James 2:14-17). Peter lists several of faith's actions: learning to know God better, developing perseverance, doing God's will, loving others.

These actions do not come automatically; they require hard work. They are not optional; all of them must be a continual part of the Christian life.

We don't finish one and start on the next, but we work on them all together. God empowers and enables us, but he also gives us the responsibility to learn and to grow. We should not be surprised at or resentful of the process.

False teachers were saying that self-control was not needed because deeds do not help the believer anyway (2 Peter 2:19). It is true that deeds cannot save us, but it

is absolutely false to think they are unimportant. We are saved so that we can grow to resemble Christ and so that we can serve others.

God wants to produce his character in us. But to do this, he demands our discipline and effort. As we obey Christ who guides us by his Spirit, we will develop self-control, not only with respect to food and drink, but also with respect to our emotions.

Our faith must go beyond what we believe; it must become a dynamic part of all we do, resulting in good fruit and spiritual maturity. Salvation does not depend on good deeds, but it results in good deeds. A person who claims to be saved while remaining unchanged does not understand faith or what God has done for him or her

God set his love upon you even though you were few.

Deuteronomy 7:7

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

How did Israel deserve to be chosen above all of the other nations at that time? It was not a matter of Israel's merit, but of God keeping his promise to their ancestors. Just as God chose the nation of Israel, he has chosen all believers today to be a part of his treasured possession. Similarly, it is not because of our merit that we have come to faith in Christ. Instead God chose us out of his goodness and grace.

Watch over your heart with diligence.

Proverbs 4:23

Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

Our heart—our feelings of love and desire—dictates to a great extent how we live because we always find time to do what we enjoy. Solomon tells us to guard our heart above all else, making sure we concentrate on those desires that will keep us on the right path. Make sure your affections push you in the right direction.

Put boundaries on your desires: don't go after everything you see. Look straight ahead, keep your eyes fixed on your goal, and don't get sidetracked on detours that lead to sin.

Set your affections to love the Lord.

Deuteronomy 10:15

"Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.

Often we ask, "What does God expect of me?" Here Moses gives a summary that is simple in form and easy to remember. Here are the essentials:

- (1) Fear God (have reverence for him).
- (2) Walk in all his ways.
- (3) Love him.
- (4) Serve him with all your heart and soul.
- (5) Observe his commands. How often we complicate faith with man-made rules, regulations, and requirements. Are you frustrated and burned out from trying hard to please God? Concentrate on his real requirements and find peace. Respect, follow, love, serve, and obey.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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