

Articles and Sermons :: Heart Devotion To Christ by Newton C. Conant

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Heart Devotion To Christ

by Newton C. Conant

In Christ's resurrection, God gave Him to be head over all things to the Church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). What a glorious testimony the Church would have if Christ were always recognized as the Head of the Church in all things. He has eyes of fire (Rev. 1:14), searching, penetrating, revealing the true condition of the Church. "I am He who searches...the hearts" (Rev. 2:23). "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

In Revelation 2:1-7 Christ examines the church at Ephesus. He tells what He knows. It is full and complete knowledge of conditions in the church: "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted" (vv. 2-3).

After listing all of these wonderful qualities, we would expect approval from the risen Christ. But He continues: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (v. 4). The church had gradually left heart devotion to Christ and in its place put ministry for Christ, defense of Christ's person, faithfulness to Christ's Word, and service and sacrifice for Christ's church. Gradually it became more devoted to His interests than to Him. Christ regards this as a perilous situation. Men who have walked with God have warned us of the danger of falling into such a barren situation:

Oswald Chambers: "We may oppose Christ by being diverted to duties as well as by sin."

J. Hudson Taylor: "The intense activity of our time may lead to the neglect of personal communion."

C. H. Spurgeon: "Let not the gifts Thy love bestows estrange my heart from Thee."

Andrew Murray: "Oh, beloved, let us write that down. The presence of Jesus lost is the cause of all our wretchedness and failures."

Christ's Desire for Our Heart Devotion

Hear Jesus appealing to His people for their hearts' devotion: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings..." (Luke 13:34).

Toward the end of His earthly ministry we see Him even weeping, knowing His love was rejected – with the terrible consequences to follow: "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19:41-42).

Christ told the Samaritan woman who came to draw water from Jacob's well that God was seeking the adoration of her heart, desiring earnestly to give her the living water of the Holy Spirit (John 4:23-24).

Even after His resurrection, the risen and glorified Christ is still seeking the heart devotion of believers. He is now standing outside the door, knocking to get attention and calling for admission (Rev. 3:20). Christ is no longer in the midst of the church as at Ephesus. He is now outside the Laodicean church, expressing His desire for intimate personal communion: "I will come in to him, and will dine with him and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). The church feels no spiritual need, boasting: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." In Christ's correct view, this church was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). However, He still stands, and knocks, and calls, earnestly desiring their heart devotion.

The Lord of all the earth is searching for those who will give Him heart devotion. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chron. 16:9). When God finds such a person, His work goes forth in supernatural power and blessing.

The Apostle Paul warns believers of Satan's attempt to divert Christians from heart devotion to Christ: "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3 NIV). Satan promised much to Eve that seemed desirable. Satan will encourage Christians to be involved in any good work that separates the believer from heart devotion to Christ. Eve lost all by this deception.

The Christian who is enticed to leave heart devotion to Christ will have a powerless, ineffective ministry and often will be led to consider retiring. There are many of God's servants who are earnest and sincere in preaching the Word of God, but who long to be delivered from frustration, despair and fruitlessness. Their ministry has become an earnest effort of self apart from the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

A survey of church growth by Fuller Institute revealed that many pastors and Christian workers feel discouraged and defeated. Casualties in Christian service are enormous. May not the reason for this tragic decline be found in the lack of spiritual power, caused by failure to serve in heart devotion to Christ. God's Word contains many precious promises for continued fruitfulness: "And even to old age I am He; and even to gray hair I will carry you" (Isa. 46:4). "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age" (Psa. 92:14).

Heart Communion with Christ Essential for Fruitfulness

Christ teaches us in John 15 not only that the branch is totally dependent upon the vine for life and fruitfulness, but also that the vine must have an outlet through which to produce fruit. For this fruit the vine is completely dependent upon the branch. Vine life expresses itself only through the branch. If the branch does not abide in the vine and submit to pruning, then there can be no fruit. How dependent therefore is the vine upon the branch. Likewise, how dependent is Christ upon the believer: "And He could there do no mighty work...and He marveled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:5-6).

All fruit bearing is therefore dependent upon the Christian living in heart devotion to Christ. "I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). The life of a Christian through whom Christ flows unhindered is the branch that bears fruit. It is Christ's life flowing through yielded believers which transforms other lives. The most Christ-like believer is therefore the most fruitful.

It is easy in training students for Christian service to neglect to stress the supreme qualification of heart devotion to Christ. Many times the result is well-trained, intelligent, knowledgeable, eloquent spiritual failures.

This truth of life from Christ flowing through believers is expressed in many other Scriptures, such as John 7:38: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his shall flow rivers of living water." The overwhelming power to convince the unsaved of the reality of Christ is the presence of Christ in believers. In His high priestly prayer shortly before His crucifixion, Christ prayed as follows: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:23).

No matter how hard we try, no matter how sincere we are, nobody can live the Christian life except Jesus Christ, and He wants to live His life in me and in you. Therefore, I urge you to make the cultivation of heart devotion to Jesus Christ the supreme goal of every day of your life.

Re: Heart Devotion To Christ by Newton C. Conant - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/2/8 22:44

How can it be that we so easily forget about the Lord. We will talk about everything under the sun and somehow forget to even mention His name. He provides us with unspeakable riches and we do not even bother to thank Him. He touches us with the warmth of His love and we brush Him off as if our time is our own.

Oh the blessedness that is to be found in Him. If we would only believe that He is right there beside us, willing to live out His life through us. If we would only believe . . .