

## Infatuations

by Norman Grubb

It is important to see that the negative pulls on us are assets rather than liabilities. They are the negative arousals by which other-love can be expressed as it replaces its opposite: fear is replaced by courage, strain by rest, weakness by strength.

"*When I am weak,*" said Paul, "*then am I strong*"— not "have strength," but "am strong." Christ's strength is manifested through its Paul-weakness form.

As we settle into our new way of "*overcoming evil with good*" (coming over the evil spirit by the Good Spirit as us), what happens to evil? It is swallowed up! This is the proper use of a negative. So we join James in "*counting all joy*" these incessant negative assaults. We take them in stride, and walk on in the Spirit, with never a moment of condemnation, but the excitement of adventure and goals gained.

On one point we often need a special reminder. It's in the area of our body-responses. We know there is nothing wrong with our vigorous physical appetites. God made us with them. But we also know that these body appetites are the battleground of our lives, the area of great downfalls and destructive defeats for millions of people, and the scene of our fiercest struggles and self-condemnation for failures even in our redeemed lives. I mean the appetites of food, liquor, drugs and sex.

For some, the "struggle" is with eating and overweight; with others it is tobacco or some other narcotic; with some it is alcohol; and to some degree with nearly all of us, certainly us men, it is sex. In this article I want to center our attention on sex. Its major hold on us is obvious, and in fact all lists of flesh-sins in the New Testament start off with sex: fornication, adulteries, lasciviousness, uncleanness. Such phrases continually recur (e.g., Gal. 5:19, and Mark 7:21). The reason these sins are listed first is clear enough to most of us: this is our experience. Sex draws. Of course, this is true in the right use of sex in marriage (as Paul plainly states in 1 Cor. 7:26, and Heb. 13:4), but there is also the normal attraction between the sexes outside of marriage. Whatever may be the responses of women, I know that we men respond to them, both in themselves and in their outer physical appearance.

At what point then do we cross the border-line between pleasant admiration, with controlled responses, and sex-lust? First of all, let's make sure we understand that there is no escaping sex. Everything has sex; the whole universe in its division by God into positive and negative as the sole means of activity and manifestation is by opposites that seek each other and are therefore "sexed." The only question which remains is at what point does a right and normal sexual response cross the line into what the Bible calls lust?

I am not speaking of the unsaved who, in their abandonment as a fallen race, resort to the total misuse of sex in adulteries, fornications, and perversions. I am now centering on the temptations, battles, and frequent failures, followed by condemnation, occasioned by our sexual urges and responses in our born-again lives. The answer is found in our understanding and application of the soul-spirit differentiation of Hebrews 4:12. We know, in our walk in the Spirit, that the acts of fornication or adultery *are* sins, for "*they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 6:9,10). Christians can fall into such sin, and when there is such a fall, there is the way of confession, repentance, and cleansing as in 1 John 1:9. Such repentance carries with it the total cessation of the relationship, and the "*renewing of the mind*" that regards any future possibility of such a sin as out of the question because of the keeping power of God. ("*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" (Gen. 39:9)).

But how do the normal pulls of sex in all our daily contacts relate to the commission of those sins regarded as not in the “vocabulary” of the believer? At what point do such pulls, by the eye or mind or touch, become sin? We are all surrounded by a constant stream of physical enticement against which we struggle, producing nagging guilt and a sense of failure. The answer is found in a proper division between soul and spirit. Our spirit (we joined to Christ, one spirit) does not want the ways of flesh. However, our bodies (normally assets for God) can mislead our souls. The eye, mind, and touch can affect our soul-emotions, thoughts, and body responses. It is here where most of us have been caught up with false guilt and condemnation.

James makes it plain that temptation is the drawing of desire, but temptation is not sin (James 1:14,15). We sin when we have responded to those drawings, and either agree within ourselves to commit the sin if we have the opportunity, or else we actually commit it. But when we have not agreed, but have merely been attracted, that is not sin.

This is where we tend to be filled with false condemnations and vain struggles. In our old false outlook, we thought there was something “unclean” about our human appetites and responses. So we were condemned by the sexual urges and struggles and failures; deep within us, we just accepted that we were pretty “dirty” saints. You can see it plainly enough with us men in meetings where we are being exhorted to live the victorious life, or even told that we can do so. We look down, not up, and our faces often show an inner sense of guilt (thinking of our many sexual urges), or an inner indifference because “such talk is both phony and impossible.”

When we have come to our new “revelation” that there is nothing unclean about our humanity in all its appetites, but rather God-made and beautiful; and when we have added to that the new recognition that we shall always live tempted, because God has privileged us to remain in the world which is sex-obsessed and uses all possible means to stimulate that obsession; then we will squarely recognize that we shall always have these sexual attractions by the eye, mind, and touch, but that they are *not wrong*. They are normal living in this world. This is where, for instance, because of a misunderstanding of Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:28, many have come under false condemnation: “*That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” Underline “*in his heart,*” because here (spirit) is the place of choice, not just the attraction. And that’s the point. The heart choice to which Jesus referred meant the inner intention to seduce her if I could. So now we make that vital division in our recognition between an adulterous purposing of heart (spirit), which by God’s grace we in Christ do *not* make—at most it is in our thoughts for a passing moment—and the constant impact of our human relationships which can and do include soul-body attractions—“temptations.”

In our former erroneous outlook we would have felt condemned, seeing it as sin, and would always be seeking deliverance from such flesh-diversion of sight and mind. But now we recognize the world is geared to offer such enticements, and when responding to such, we now say: “Of course my humanity responds to what attracts its appetites. That is not sin. It is normal while we are in this world.” But having admitted that “enticement,” we say, “But that’s not the real me. That is a pull on my soul-body from without. I am dead to that. I am Christ in me, as me, and He directs my interests and desires to His ways of other-love.”

We know that our real interest is not on an outer person for our gratification, but on Christ in a person, or on Christ being formed in a person. Thus, the very attractions that could lead to self-gratification become the negative stimuli for that same flesh to become quickened and diverted to Christ manifested through me—spirit, soul and body—to other people. So “*there is therefore no condemnation,*” but further progress in faith.

Because we are so body-appetite prone, even in our new “Christ in us as us” relationship, we are still slow to recognize and accept with all boldness that not only does our union reality mean Christ expressing Himself by our *spirits*, but “*I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless*” (1 Thes. 5:23). Since soul and body are equally included in the wholeness of our God-union, we can take a further step forward and boldly walk free as whole persons, without the former negative special watchfulness over our bodies, enjoying our bodies as totally His agents. There is no fear in love.

The extent to which we can express affection (once the sinful use of our bodies, as defined in the Scripture, is specifically excluded), must be left to each individual. Nor is it for us to judge one another. Rather, we are to retain our new-level position of seeing each other as Christ in our unique forms. It is up to each individual to judge for himself at what point any particular expression of affection is knowingly leading on to the “lust” mentioned in James 1:14, and to heed the warning of Paul when he wrote, “*Flee also youthful lust*” (2 Tim. 2:22).

There is a right and wrong interpretation of love. In its “wrongness” it frequently destroys many lives and marriages among those who are still in the world without a redemption experience, and it also has deceived some who are the Lord’s. Those born of the Spirit *inwardly know* that their only true love is God’s other-love shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). But to those in the flesh, love is something emotional and physical, basically self-interested, because it still is the spirit of self-centeredness in them.

Therefore, when an unbelieving husband is attracted to another woman, and his outer response to his own mate appears to have cooled on the flesh level, he will just say he has changed his “love.” And nowadays it’s easy enough to get a divorce. The same can be true of a wife. If the only power a person knows is the apparent power of the flesh, which is especially strong on the sexual level, who can withstand it?

But we are talking of Another Power. What do we do if what the Scripture calls an “inordinate affection”—a strong, almost overwhelming, passion— grabs us? For we well know this does happen. Because we know what true love is (a spirit of self-giving; God’s love expressed through us) we recognize that the soul-body part of our love (which is meant to be equally real in us all) is secondary. It is merely an extra, though delightful, addition to our true spirit-bonds with our mate. So we know that a sudden change of soul emotion towards a person does not really mean that we are “in love” with them, as the world misnames it, but we are gripped with a strong “inordinate affection.”

If we don’t know how to properly differentiate between soul and spirit, we come under false condemnation, regarding any such relationship as adulterous, seeing ourselves as unfaithful to our mates. But temptation is not sin. It is the normal pull on our humanity.

If then such an “affection” takes hold of us, we do not come under condemnation, but face it squarely. We may possibly see that we were not wary or quick enough to heed Paul’s warning to “*flee*.” But there it is. First, of course, we settle it plainly that our bodies are “*not for fornication, but for the Lord*” (1 Cor. 6:13). We take our full inner stand against any such temptations; and if this affection is already mutually recognized, then we make plain to the other one that this will not have a flesh and sin ending. So then what? Back we come to our basis. We are spirit joined to His Spirit, and motivated by His nature of “other-love.” We recognize any flesh pulls on our affections in soul or body, but then we affirm that they are not the real love of mate to mate; but a passing infatuation. Then, because we know what spirit-love is, we see this sudden “love-storm” to be a call to the daily dying and rising again of which Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:8-11. We therefore replace the flesh-pulls with our recognition of our death in Christ to all such pulls, and in our resurrection replace it with a spirit-pull to express the opposite to the temptation.

In a longer, stronger pull of an inordinate affection, we deliberately take the same stand. We see it as a call to reverse the stream of passion. Instead of it being for our self-gratification, we recognize the death-resurrection reality, and we turn the flow of affection into a Godly desire for the person concerned—that Christ may be fully formed in them. In other words, we turn it into an intercession—dying to anything personal, and taking the position by faith that Christ will be His living self in that one. This may take time when an affection is strong, but ultimately we will come to see that the Lord has given us the inordinate affection (not to be considered as a rival love) as an opportunity in which the Spirit by us can now turn it into gain rather than to see it as disaster. So we go through with it as a gained intercession—first in our faith release and replacement, and then in God’s time to see the same release and replacement in the life of the other person involved.

What should be our attitude toward a mate who is involved in an infatuation? This is where we move into a new position of faith for our spouse. We may be torn by jealousy, fear for our marriage, anger, bitterness, hatred, what not. But our own marriage will never be entirely safe until some testing experience has come to us in which, in that most intimate relationship, we see our married love as not centered in our feelings for and trust in one another, but in the marriage of each of us as brides of Christ. Our human union is the symbol of that, and therefore of Christ in each other. That means that in our walk of faith the Holy Spirit has His own full control of our mate, and because we both know our marriage bonds are unbreakable, we wholly trust Him in our spouse through whatever situations may arise.

If it is a matter of an unequal yoke, where husband and wife are not one in Christ and there is no spirit relationship, should there be signs of the marriage breaking up, maybe through evidences of unfaithfulness, then the place of victory is not first that the marriage may be retained, but that, as an intercessor, my aim and position of faith is simply and solely that my spouse may come to know Christ, and Christ be formed in him or her.

Here then is the totally liberated way in which we must see our marriage relationship: a total trust in our mates, based on our seeing Christ in them. If any rival” affection arises, we know and see it not as a rival, but as an, intercession. Thus, in all things, marriage included, we are *“more than conquerors.”*