

THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION

By Thomas Chalmers
(1780-1847)

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*“Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world.
If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” — 1Joh 2.15.*

THERE are two ways in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world: either (1) by a demonstration of the world’s vanity, such that the heart will be prevailed upon to simply withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or (2) by proposing another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment, such that the heart will be prevailed upon not simply to *quit* an old affection (which would have nothing to succeed it), but to exchange an old affection for a new one. My purpose is to show that, from the constitution of our nature, the former method is altogether incompetent and ineffectual; and that only the latter method will suffice to rescue and recover the heart from the wrong affection that domineers over it. After accomplishing this purpose, I will attempt a few practical observations.

Love may be regarded in two different conditions.

The *first* condition is when its object is at a distance; and then it becomes love in a state of *desire*. The *second* is when its object is in possession; and then it becomes love in a state of *indulgence*.

A state of DESIRE. Under the impulse of desire, man feels himself urged onward in some path or pursuit of activity for its gratification. The faculties of his mind are put into busy exercise. In the steady direction of one great and engrossing interest, his attention is recalled from the many reveries into which it might otherwise have wandered, and the powers of his body are forced away from an indolence in which it else might have languished. That time is crowded with occupation which, if not for some object of keen and devoted ambition, might have drivelled along in successive hours of weariness and distaste. And though hope does not always enliven, and success does not always crown this career of exertion, yet in the midst of this very variety, and with the alternations of occasional disappointment, the machinery of the whole man is kept in a sort of congenial play, and upheld in that tone and temper which are most agreeable to it.

This is such that, if the machinery were to stop through uprooting that desire which forms the driving principle of all this movement — if it were to receive no impulse from *another* desire that is substituted in its place — then the man would be left with all his propensities toward action, in a state of the most painful and unnatural abandonment. A sensitive being suffers and is in turmoil if, after having thoroughly rested from his fatigue, or been relieved from his pain, he continues to possess powers without any excitement of these powers — if he possesses a capacity to desire, without an object of that desire — or if he has spare energy without a counterpart, without a stimulus to call it into operation.

The misery of such a condition is often realized by someone who is retired from business, or who is retired from law, or who is even retired from the occupations of racing, and the gaming table. Such is the demand of our nature for an object in pursuit, that no accumulation of previous success can extinguish it. And thus it is, that the most prosperous merchant, and the most victorious general, and the most fortunate gamester, when the labour of their respective vocations has come to a close, are often found languishing in the midst of all their acquisitions, as if out of their kindred and rejoicing element. Having such a constitutional appetite for employment in man, it is quite in vain to attempt cutting away from him the spring or the principle of one employment, without providing him with another. The whole heart and habit will rise in resistance against such an undertaking. The otherwise unoccupied female who spends the hours of every evening at some hazardous play, knows as well as you that the pecuniary gain, or the honourable triumph of a

successful contest, are altogether paltry. It is not such a demonstration of vanity as this that will force her away from her dear and delightful occupation. The habit cannot be so *displaced* as to leave nothing but a negative and cheerless vacancy behind it — though it may be so *supplanted* as to be followed up by another habit of employment, to which the power of some new affection has constrained her. It is willingly suspended, for example, on any single evening, if it is required that the time usually allotted to gaming, be spent on preparations for an approaching assembly. The ascendant power of a second affection will do what no exposition, however forcible, about the folly and worthlessness of the first, could ever effectuate.

And it is the same in the great world. We shall never be able to arrest any of its leading pursuits by a naked demonstration of their vanity. It is quite in vain to think of stopping one of these pursuits in any way other than by stimulating to another. In attempting to bring a worldly man who is intent and busied with prosecuting his objects to a dead stand, we do not merely have to encounter the charm which he annexes to these objects — but we have to encounter the pleasure which he feels in the very prosecution of them. It is not enough, then, that we dissipate the charm by a moral, eloquent, and affecting exposure of its illusiveness. We must address the eye of his mind to another object, with a charm powerful enough to dispossess the first of its influences, and to engage him in some other prosecution that is as full of interest, hope, and congenial activity, as the former. It is this which stamps an impotency on all moral and pathetic declamations about the insignificance of the world. A man will no more consent to the misery of being without an object, because that object is a trifle — or of being without a pursuit, because that pursuit terminates in some frivolous or fugitive acquirement — than he will voluntarily submit himself to torture just because that torture is to be of short duration. If being altogether without desire and exertion is a state of turmoil and discomfort, then the present desire, with its correspondent train of exertion, is not to be gotten rid of simply by destroying it. It must be done by substituting another desire, and another line or habit of exertion in its place. And the most effectual way of withdrawing the mind from one object, is not by turning it toward a desolate and unpeopled *vacancy* — but by presenting for its regard, another object that is even more alluring.

A state of INDULGENCE. These remarks do not apply merely to love considered in its state of desire for an object that is not yet obtained. They also apply to love considered in its state of indulgence, or placid gratification, with an object that is already in possession. It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction. At least, it is very seldom that this is done through the instrumentality of reasoning. It may be done by excessive pampering, but it is almost never done by the mere force of mental determination. But what cannot be destroyed, may be dispossessed — and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind.

It is thus that the boy ceases, at length, to be the slave of his appetite, because a manlier taste has now brought it into subordination — and the youth ceases to idolize pleasure because the idol of wealth has become stronger and gotten the ascendancy. Even the love of money ceases to have the mastery over the heart of many a thriving citizen, because it is drawn into the whirl of city politics. Another affection has been worked into his moral system, and he is now lorded over by the love of power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but its desire for having *some* object or other is unconquerable. Its adhesion to what it has fastened the preference of its regards on, cannot willingly be overcome by the rending away of a simple separation. It can be done only by the application of something else, to which it may feel the adhesion of a still stronger and more powerful preference. Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart, that it must have *something* to lay hold of — and if wrested away without substituting another something in its place, it would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind, as hunger is to the natural system. It may be dispossessed of *one* object, or of *any* object, but it cannot be desolated of *all*. Let there be a breathing and a sensitive heart that is without a liking and without an affinity for any of the

things that are around it — in a state of cheerless abandonment — and it would be alive to nothing but the burden of its own consciousness, and feel it to be intolerable. It would make no difference to its owner whether he dwelt in the midst of a cheerful and goodly world; or if he were placed far beyond the outskirts of creation — for he would dwell as a solitary unit in a dark and unpeopled nothingness. The heart *must* have something to cling to. Never, by its own voluntary consent, will it so denude itself of its attachments, that not one object will remain that can draw or solicit it.

The misery of a heart thus deprived of all relish for that which usually ministers enjoyment, is strikingly exemplified in those who, satiated with indulgence, have been so belaboured, as it were, with the variety and poignancy of the pleasurable sensations they have experienced, that they are at length fatigued out of all capacity for sensation whatsoever. The disease of *ennui* ¹ is more frequent in the French metropolis, where amusement is more exclusively the occupation of the higher classes, than it is in the British metropolis, where the longings of the heart are more diversified by the resources of business and politics. *There* are found the devotees of fashion, who in this way have at length become the victims of fashionable excess — those in whom the very multitude of their enjoyments have at last extinguished their power to enjoy — those who with the gratifications of art and nature at their command, now look upon all that is around them with an eye of tastelessness — those who, plied with the delights of sense and of splendour even to weariness, and being incapable of higher delights, have come to the end of all their perfection — like Solomon of old, who found it to be vanity and vexation.

The man whose heart has thus been turned into a desert, can vouch for the insupportable languor which must ensue, when one affection is thus plucked away from the bosom, without another to replace it. It is not necessary that a man receive pain from anything, in order to become miserable — it is enough that he looks at everything with distaste. In that asylum which is the repository of minds out of joint, where the organ of *feeling*, as well as the organ of *intellect*, has been impaired, it is not in the cell of loud and frantic outcries where we meet with the acme of mental suffering. Rather, *that* is the individual who peers out in wretchedness at all his fellows — the one who, throughout the whole expanse of nature and society, does not meet an object that has at all the power to detain or interest him — who neither in earth beneath or heaven above, knows of a single charm to which his heart can send out one desirous or responding movement — to whom the world, which in his eye is a vast and empty desolation, has left him nothing but his own consciousness to feed upon. He is dead to all that is without him, and alive to nothing but the load of his own torpid and useless existence.

It will now be seen, perhaps, why the heart clings to its present affections with so much tenacity, when an attempt is made to do away with them by a mere process of uprooting. It will not consent to be so desolated. The strong man, ^{Mat 12.29} whose dwelling-place is there, may be compelled to give way to another occupier — but unless another is stronger than he, with power to dispossess and succeed him, he will keep his present lodgment inviolable. The heart would revolt against its own emptiness. It could not bear to be left in such a state of waste and cheerless insipidity.² The moralist who tries such a process of dispossession upon the heart, is thwarted at every step by the recoil of its own mechanism. You have heard that Nature abhors a vacuum. Such at least is the nature of the heart — that although the room which is in it may exchange one inmate for another, it cannot be left empty; not without the pain of most intolerable suffering.

It is not enough, then, to argue for the folly of an existing affection. It is not enough, in terms of a forcible or an affecting demonstration, to make good the evanescence ³ of its object. It may not even be enough to associate the threats and the terrors of some coming vengeance, with indulging

¹ *Ennui*: the feeling of being bored by something we perceive as tedious.

² *Insipidity*: extreme dullness; lacking spirit or interest.

³ *Evanescence*: an object's fading and gradual vanishing from sight; its fleeting nature.

that object. The heart may still resist every such application, because obedience to it would finally conduct it to a state so much at war with all its appetites, that it would be downright debilitation. To so tear away an affection from the heart, as to leave it bare of all its regards, and of all its preferences, would be a hard and hopeless undertaking. And it would appear as if the sole powerful engine of dispossession, is to bring the mastery of another affection to bear upon it.

We do not know of a more sweeping interdict⁴ upon the affections of Nature, than that which is delivered by the Apostle in the verse before us. To bid a man into whom there has not yet entered the great and ascendant influence of the principle of regeneration — to bid him withdraw his love from all the things that are in the world — is to bid him to give up all the affections that are in his heart. *The world is the all of a natural man.* He has no taste or desire that does not point to something placed within the confines of its visible horizon. He loves nothing above it, and he cares for nothing beyond it. To bid him not to love the world, is to pass a sentence of expulsion on all the inmates of his bosom. To estimate the magnitude and the difficulty of such a surrender, let us only think that it would be just as arduous to prevail upon him not to love wealth — which is but *one* of the things in the world; or to prevail upon him to set wilful fire to his own property. He might do this with sore and painful reluctance, if he saw that the salvation of his life hung upon it. But he would do this *willingly*, if he saw that a new property of tenfold value was to instantly emerge from the wreck of the old one.

In this case, there is something more than the mere displacement of an affection. The one affection is overcome by another. But to desolate his heart of all love for the things of the world, without substituting another love in its place, would be a process of as unnatural violence to him, as to destroy all the things he has in the world, and to give him nothing in their place. So that, if not loving the world is indispensable to one's Christianity, then the crucifixion of the old man is not too strong a term to mark that transition in his history, when all old things are done away with, and all things become new. We hope that by this time you understand the impotency of a mere demonstration of this world's insignificance. Its sole practical effect, if it had any, would be to leave the heart in a state which is insupportable, and that is a mere state of nakedness and negation. You may remember the fond and unbroken tenacity with which your own heart has often recurred to pursuits, above the utter frivolity which it sighed and wept about only yesterday. May adding up your short-lived days on the Sabbath, make the clearest impression upon your understanding. And from his fancied bed of death, may the preacher cause a voice to descend in rebuke and mockery of all the pursuits of earthliness — as he pictures before you the fleeting generations of men, with the absorbing grave, where all the joys and interests of the world hasten to their sure and speedy oblivion — may *you*, touched and solemnized by his argument, feel for a moment as if you were on the eve of a practical and permanent emancipation from a scene of so much vanity.

But the morrow comes, and the business of the world, and the objects of the world, and the moving forces of the world, come along with it. And the machinery of the heart, in virtue of which it must have *something* to grasp, or *something* to adhere to, brings it under a kind of moral necessity to be actuated just as before. On utter repulsion towards a state that is so unkindly as that of being frozen out of both delight and desire, the heart feels all the warmth and urgency of its usual solicitations. Nor in the habit and history of the whole man, can we detect so much as one symptom of the new creature. So that, the church — instead of being a school of obedience for him — has been a mere sauntering place for the luxury of a passing and theatrical emotion. And the preaching, which is mighty to compel the attendance of multitudes; which is mighty to still and to solemnize the hearers into a kind of tragic sensibility; which is mighty in the play of variety and vigour that it can keep up around the imagination — is *not* mighty to pull down strongholds.

⁴ *Interdict*: a court order prohibiting a party from doing a certain activity.

The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit its preference for another, who will subordinate the world and bring it down from its usual ascendancy? If the throne which is placed there must have an occupier, and the tyrant that now reigns has occupied it wrongfully, he might not leave a bosom which would rather detain him than be left in desolation. But may he not give way to the lawful Sovereign, appearing with every charm that can secure His willing admittance, and take to himself His great power to subdue the moral nature of man, and to reign over it? In a word, if the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object, is to fasten it in positive love of another, then it is not by exposing the worthlessness of the former, but by directing the mental eye to the worth and excellence of the latter, that all old things are to be done away, and all things are to become new. Obliterating all our present affections by simply expunging them, leaving their seat unoccupied, would be to destroy the old character and substitute no new character in its place. But when they make their departure upon the ingress of other visitors; when they resign their sway to the power and predominance of new affections; when by abandoning the heart to solitude, they merely give way to a successor who turns it into as busy a residence of desire and interest and expectation as before — there is nothing in all this to thwart or to overcome any of the laws of our sentient nature. And we see how, in full accord with the mechanism of the heart, a great moral revolution may be made to take place upon it.

This, we trust, will explain the operation of that charm which accompanies the effectual preaching of the gospel. The love of God and the love of the world, are two affections that are not merely in a state of *rivalship*, but in a state of *enmity*. And that enmity is so irreconcilable, that they cannot dwell together in the same bosom. We have already affirmed how impossible it would be for the heart, by any innate elasticity of its own, to cast the world away from it and thus reduce itself to a wilderness — *the heart is not so constituted*. The only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one. Nothing can exceed the magnitude of the required change in a man's character, when he is bid (as he is in the New Testament) not to love the world — no, nor any of the things that are in the world. For this so comprehends all that is dear to him in existence, that it is equivalent to a command to self-annihilate.

But the same revelation which dictates so mighty an obedience, places within our reach as mighty an *instrument* of obedience. It brings for admittance to the very door of our heart, an affection which — once it is seated upon its throne — will either subordinate every previous inmate, or bid it to depart. Beside the world, it places before the eye of the mind, Him who made the world, and with this peculiarity (which is all its own): that in the Gospel we so *behold* God, that we may *love* God. It is there, and there only, where God stands revealed as an object of confidence to sinners; and it is where our desire for Him is not chilled into apathy, by that barrier of human guilt which intercepts every approach that is not made to Him, through the appointed Mediator. It is bringing in this *better* hope, by which we draw near to God. To live without hope, is to live without God; and if the heart is without God, the world will then have all the ascendancy. It is God, apprehended by the believer as God in Christ, who alone can displace it from this ascendancy. It is when God stands dismantled of the terrors which belong to Him as an offended Lawgiver; and when we are enabled by faith (which is His own gift) to see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and to hear His beseeching voice as it professes good will to men, and entreats the return of all who will, to a full pardon and a gracious acceptance — it is *then* that a love paramount to the love of the world, and at length expulsive of it, first arises in the regenerated bosom. It is when we are released from the spirit of bondage with which love cannot dwell, and are admitted into the number of God's children through the faith that is in Christ Jesus, and the spirit of adoption is poured upon us — it is *then* that the heart, brought under the mastery of one great and predominant affection, is delivered from the tyranny of its former desires, in the only way in which deliverance is possible.

And that faith which is revealed to us from heaven, being indispensable to a sinner's justification in the sight of God, is also the instrument of the greatest of all moral and spiritual achievements — on a nature that is dead to the influence, and beyond the reach, of every other application.

Thus we may come to perceive what it is that makes the most effective kind of preaching. It is not enough to hold up to the world's eye, the mirror of its own imperfections. It is not enough to come out with a demonstration, however moving, of the evanescent character of all its enjoyments. It is not enough to travel the walk of experience, and speak to your own conscience and your own recollection, of the deceitfulness of the heart, and the deceitfulness of all that the heart is set upon. There is many a bearer of the Gospel message who does not have the shrewdness of natural discernment enough, nor the power of characteristic description enough, nor the talent of moral delineation enough — to present you with a vivid and faithful sketch of the existing follies of society. But that very corruption which he lacks the faculty to *represent* in its visible details, he may yet practically be the instrument of *eradicating* in its principle. Let him be but a faithful expounder of the gospel testimony — unable as he may be to apply a descriptive hand to the character of the present world. Let him but report with accuracy the matter which revelation has brought to him from a distant world — unskilled as he is in the work of anatomizing the heart, as with the power of a novelist, to create a graphical or impressive exhibition of the worthlessness of its many affections. Let him only deal in those mysteries of peculiar doctrine on which the best of novelists have thrown the wantonness of their derision. He may not be able with the eye of shrewd and satirical observation, to expose to the ready recognition of his hearers, the desires of worldliness. But with the tidings of the gospel in commission, he may wield the only engine that can uproot them. He cannot do what some have done when, as if by the hand of a magician, they have brought to view, out from the hidden recesses of our nature, the foibles and lurking appetites which belong to it. But he has a truth in his possession, which into whatever heart it enters, will swallow them all, like the rod of Aaron. And unqualified as he may be to describe the old man in all the nicer shading of his natural and constitutional varieties, what is deposited with him is that ascendant influence under which the leading tastes and tendencies of the old man are destroyed, and he becomes a new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us not cease, then, to ply the only instrument of powerful and positive operation, to put away from you the love of the world. Let us try every legitimate method of finding access to your hearts for the love of Him who is greater than the world. For this purpose, let us, if possible, clear away that shroud of unbelief which so hides and darkens the face of the Deity. Let us insist on His claims to your affection. And whether it is in the shape of gratitude, or in the shape of esteem, let us never cease to affirm that, in the whole of that wondrous economy — the purpose of which is to reclaim a sinful world unto Himself — the God of love so sets Himself forth in characters of endearment, that nothing but faith and understanding are lacking on your part, to call forth the love of your hearts in return.

And here, let us refer to the incredulity of a worldly man when he brings his own sound and secular experience to bear upon the high doctrines of Christianity — when he looks at regeneration as an impossible thing — when feeling, as he does, the obstinacies of his own heart on the side of present things. Casting an intelligent eye (much exercised perhaps in the observation of human life) on the equal obstinacies of all who are around him, he pronounces this whole matter about the crucifixion of the old man, and the resurrection of a new man in his place, to be in downright opposition to all that is known and witnessed of the real nature of humanity. We think that we have seen such men. They are firmly entrenched in their own vigorous and homebred sagacity. They are shrewdly regardful of all that passes before them through the week, and upon the scenes of ordinary business. They look at that transition of the heart by which it gradually dies unto time, and awakens in all, the life of a new-felt and ever-growing desire towards God, as a mere Sabbath speculation. And with all their attention engrossed upon the concerns of earthliness, they continue to be unmoved to the end of their days, amongst the feelings, appetites, and pursuits of

earthliness. If the thought of death and another state of being after it, crosses their mind at all, it is not with so radical a change as being born again, that they ever connect the idea of preparing for it. They have some vague conception of its being quite enough that they acquit themselves in some decent and tolerable way, of their relative obligations; and that, on the strength of some social and domestic moralities that are often realized by someone into whose heart the love of God has never entered, they will be transplanted in safety from *this* world — where God is the Being with whom it may almost be said that they have had nothing to do — to *that* world where God is the Being with whom they will have to do, mainly and immediately throughout all eternity. They admit all that is said about the utter vanity of time, when considered as a resting place. But they resist every application that is made upon the heart of man, with a view to so shift its tendencies, that it will not afterward find all its rest and all its refreshment in the interests of time. In fact, they regard such an attempt as an altogether ethereal enterprise. With a tone of secular wisdom — caught from the familiarities of every-day experience — they see an imaginary character in all that is said about setting our affections on things that are above; ^{Col 3.2} and walking by faith; ^{2Cor 5.7} and keeping our hearts in such a love of God, ^{Eph 3.17} that it shuts out from them the love of the world; ^{1Joh 2.15} and of having no confidence in the flesh; ^{Phi 3.3} and of so renouncing earthly things as to have our citizenship in heaven. ^{Phi 3.20}

Now, it is altogether worthy of being remarked about those men who thus disrelish spiritual Christianity and, in fact, deem it an impracticable acquirement, how consistent their incredulity about the *demands* of Christianity, and their incredulity about the *doctrines* of Christianity, are with one another. No wonder they feel the work of the New Testament is beyond their strength, so long as they hold the words of the New Testament to be beneath their attention. Neither they nor anyone else can dispossess the heart of an *old* affection, except by the expulsive power of a *new* one. And if that new affection is the love of God, neither they nor anyone else can be made to entertain it, except on such a representation of the Deity, as will draw the heart of the sinner towards Him. Now, it is just their *unbelief* which screens from the discernment of their minds, this representation. They do not see the love of God in sending His Son into the world. They do not see the expression of His tenderness toward men, in not sparing Him, but giving Him up to the death for us all. They do not see the sufficiency of the atonement, or the sufferings that were endured by Him who bore the burden that sinners should have borne. They do not see the blended holiness and compassion of the Godhead, in that He passed by the transgressions of His creatures, and yet could not pass them by without an expiation. It is a mystery to them, how a man should pass to the state of godliness from a state of nature. But if they only had a believing view of God manifested in the flesh, this would resolve for them the whole mystery of godliness. As it is, they cannot quit their old affections, because they are out of sight from all those truths which have influence to raise a new one. They are like the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, when they were required to make bricks without straw. They cannot love God while they lack the only food which can nourish this affection in a sinner's bosom. However great their errors may be, both in resisting the demands of the Gospel as impracticable, and in rejecting the doctrines of the Gospel as inadmissible, yet there is not a spiritual man (and it is the prerogative of someone who is spiritual to judge all men) who will not perceive that there is a consistency in these errors.

But if there is a consistency in the errors, then in like manner, there is a consistency in the truths which oppose them. The man who believes in the peculiar doctrines, will readily bow to the peculiar demands of Christianity. When he is told to love God supremely, this may startle another; but it will not startle one to whom God has been revealed in peace, and in pardon, and in all the freeness of an offered reconciliation. When told to shut out the world from his heart, this may be impossible for someone who has nothing to replace it with — but it is not impossible with one who has found in God a sure and satisfying portion. When told to withdraw his affections from the things that are beneath, this would be laying an order of self-extinction upon the man, who does not know another quarter in the whole sphere of his contemplation, to which he could transfer

them. But it would not be grievous to someone whose view has been opened up to the loveliness and glory of the things that are above, and can there find a most ample and delighted occupation for every feeling of his soul. When told not to look to the things that are seen and temporal, this would be blotting out the light of all that is visible, from the prospect of someone in whose eye there is a wall of partition between a guilty nature and the joys of eternity. But someone who believes that Christ has broken down this wall, finds a gathering radiance upon his soul, as he looks onwards in faith to the things that are unseen and eternal. Tell a man to be holy, and how can he compass such a performance, when his sole fellowship with holiness is a fellowship of despair? It is the atonement of the cross reconciling the holiness of the lawgiver with the safety of the offender, that has opened the way for a sanctifying influence into the sinner's heart. He can take a kindred impression from the character of God now brought near, and now being at peace with him. *Separate* the demand from the doctrine; and you have either a system of righteousness that is impracticable, or a barren orthodoxy. Bring the demand and the doctrine *together*, and the true disciple of Christ is able to do the one, through the other strengthening him. The motive is adequate to the movement; and the bid to obey the Gospel is not beyond the measure of his strength, just because the doctrine of the Gospel is not beyond the measure of his acceptance. The shield of faith; and the hope of salvation, and the Word of God, and the girdle of truth — these are the armour that he has put on. And with these the battle is won, and the eminence is reached, and the man stands on the vantage ground of a new field, and a new prospect. The effect is great, but the cause is equal to it. And stupendous as this moral resurrection to the precepts of Christianity undoubtedly is, there is an element of having strength enough to give it being and continuance in the principles of Christianity. The object of the Gospel is both to *pacify* the sinner's conscience, and to *purify* his heart. It is important to observe that what mars the one, also mars the other. The best way to cast out an impure affection is to admit a pure one — and by the love of what is good, to expel the love of what is evil.

Thus it is, that the freer the Gospel, the more sanctifying the Gospel is. And the more it is received as a doctrine of *grace*, the more it will be felt as a doctrine according to *godliness*. This is one of the secrets of the Christian life: that the more a man holds from God as a pensioner, the greater the payment of service he renders back again. Under the tenure of "Do this and live," a spirit of fearfulness is sure to enter; and the jealousies of a legal bargain chase away all confidence from the intercourse between God and man. The creature, striving to be square and even with his Creator, is all the while, in fact, pursuing his own selfishness, instead of God's glory. And with all the conformities which he labours to accomplish, the *soul* of obedience is not there; the *mind* is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it ever be, under such an economy. It is only when, as in the Gospel, acceptance is bestowed *as a present*, without money and without price, ^{Isa 55.1} that the security which man feels in God, is placed beyond the reach of disturbance — or, that he can repose in Him, as one friend reposes in another — or that any liberal and generous understanding can be established between them. The one party is rejoicing over the other to do him good — the other is finding that the truest gladness of his heart lies in the impulse of a gratitude by which it is awakened to the charms of a new moral existence.

Salvation by grace — salvation by *free* grace — salvation not of works, but according to the mercy of God — salvation on such a footing is not more indispensable to the deliverance of our persons from the hand of justice, than it is to the deliverance of our hearts from the chill and the weight of ungodliness. Retain a single shred or fragment of legality with the Gospel, and we raise a topic of distrust between man and God. We take away from the power of the Gospel to melt and to conciliate. For this purpose, the *freer* it is, the *better* it is. That very peculiarity which so many dread as the germ of antinomianism, is in fact the germ of a new spirit, and a new inclination *against* it. Along with the light of a free Gospel, the love of the Gospel enters, which we are sure to chase away in proportion, as we impair the freeness. Never does the sinner find within himself so mighty a moral transformation, as when under the belief that he is saved by grace, he feels

constrained thereby to offer his heart as a devoted thing, and to deny ungodliness. To do any work in the best manner, we should make use of the fittest tools for it.

And we trust, that what has been said may serve in some degree for the practical guidance of those who would like to reach the great moral achievement of our text — but who feel that the tendencies and desires of Nature are too strong for them. We know of no other way by which to keep the love of the world out of our heart, than to keep in our hearts the love of God — and no other way by which to keep our hearts in the love of God, than building ourselves up on our most holy faith. That denial of the world, which is not possible to him that dissents from the Gospel testimony, is possible even as *all things are possible*, to him that believes. ^{Mar 9.23} To try this without faith, is to work without the right tool or the right instrument. Faith works by love; and the way to expel from the heart the love which transgresses the law, is to admit into its receptacles the love which fulfills the law. ^{Rom 13.10}

Conceive a man standing on the margin of this green world. And when he looks towards it, he sees abundance smiling upon every field, and all the blessings which earth can afford scattered in profusion throughout every family, and the light of the sun sweetly resting upon all the pleasant habitations, and the joys of human companionship brightening many a happy circle of society. Conceive this to be the general character of the scene on one side of his contemplation; and on the other side, beyond the verge of the godly planet on which he was situated, he could descry ⁵ nothing but a dark and fathomless unknown. Do you think he would bid a voluntary adieu to all the brightness and all the beauty that were before him on earth, and commit himself to the frightful solitude away from it? Would he leave its peopled dwelling places, and become a solitary wanderer through the fields of non-entity? If space offered him nothing but a wilderness, would he abandon it for the homebred scenes of life and of cheerfulness that lay so near, and exerted such a power of urgency to detain him? Would he not cling to the regions of sense, and of life, and of society? And shrinking away from the desolation that was beyond it, would he not be glad to keep his firm footing on the territory of this world, and to take shelter under the silver canopy that was stretched over it? But if, during the time of his contemplation, some happy island of the blest had floated by; and the light of its surpassing glories had burst upon his senses, with its sounds of sweeter melody — and if he clearly saw that *there*, a purer beauty rested upon every field, and a more heartfelt joy spread itself among all the families — and if he could discern there, a peace, and a piety, and a benevolence, which put a moral gladness into every bosom, and united the whole society in one rejoicing sympathy with each other, and with the beneficent Father of them all — and if he could further see that pain and mortality were unknown there; and above all, that signs of welcome were hung out, and an avenue of communication was made for him — do you not perceive that what before was the *wilderness*, would become the land of invitation; and that now the *world* would become the wilderness?

What unpeopled space could not do, can be done by a space teeming with beatific scenes,⁶ and beatific society. And let the existing tendencies of the heart be what they may to the scene that is near and visibly around us — *still*, if another stood revealed to the prospect of man, either through the channel of faith, or through the channel of his senses — then without doing violence to the constitution of his moral nature, may he die to the present world, and live to the lovelier world that stands in the distance away from it.

*Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) was a Scottish preacher who inspired William Wilberforce.
This is perhaps Chalmers' greatest and best-known sermon.*

⁵ *Descry*: catch sight of.

⁶ *Beatific*: experiencing or bestowing celestial joy.