

A Sweeter Song

"If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Colossians 2:20-3:4

The issue posed in this passage is how to defeat sin and break free from its paralyzing grip. The Colossian Heresy involved a group who advocated a super-spirituality of extreme asceticism (self-mortification to deny ungodly impulses.) But the Apostle Paul argues that the primary Christian answer to defeating sin is to be mesmerized by the **glory** and **goodness** of Christ.

"A man ought to have an understanding of the brevity of life, punishment, (re sin), with the terror of the Lord. But these will never stand-alone against a vigorous assault (from the devil)...but store the heart with a sense of the love of God in Christ, with the eternal design of his grace, with the sense of the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ, and his love in giving his life for us; get a **relish** of the **privilege** we have thereby-our adoption, justification, acceptance with God; fill the heart with thoughts of the **beauty** of holiness, as it is designed by Christ...and in the ordinary course of walking with God: he will have peace and security."

The Works of John Owen, volume 6, pg. 134

"Let a soul exercise itself to a communion with Christ and the good things of the gospel-pardon of sin, fruits of holiness, hope of glory, peace with God, joy in the Holy Spirit, and he shall have **mighty preservative** against all temptations."

The Works of John Owen, volume 6, pg. 144

"The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and to nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the **unblushing promises** of reward and the **staggering nature** of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

The Weight of Glory, C.S. Lewis

1. We must taste and see the goodness of the Lord on a continual basis.

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"

Psalm 34:8 (1 Peter 1:1-3)

2. Our affections must be continually impacted by the knowledge of the eternal mercies of Christ.

"Labor to possess the mind with the **beauty** and **excellency** of spiritual things, so they may be presented **lovely** and **desirable** to the soul; and thus, sin would be weakened. It is an innate acknowledged principle, that the soul of a man will not keep up cheerfully unto the worship of God, unless it have (has?) a discovery of a beauty and desirability in it...the mind of man must see a **beauty**, a **desirableness** in the things of God's worship, or it will not delight in it."

The Collective Works of John Owen, volume 6 pg. 188

3. In the gospel, I hear the "sweeter song" of Orpheus.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the difference between the experience with the Sirens in Greek mythology (enchanted but dangerous creatures that lured the sailors with their beautiful voices to their doom, causing the ships to crash upon the reefs near their island) regarding Odysseus (lashed to the mast) and Orpheus (the beauty of a sweeter song)?
2. What is meant when we say, "we must be enchanted by a sweeter song"?
3. What does Hebrews 11:25 teach?
4. Why is the statement in "Make Your Bed" "in that dark moment, reach inside yourself and be your very best" pg. 81 a statement that falls short of the hope extended by the reality of the gospel?
5. How are our desires "not too strong but too weak"? (see C.S. Lewis quote In the Weight of Glory)
6. How do we undermine the allurements of sin and temptation with the strong realities of the gospel?
7. For the believer, what is "lower shelf motivation" as compared to superlative, ultimate motivation?

Biblical verses to meditate on and memorize for the month of October:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Ephesians 2:8-9

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:2