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“ Preeminence ”

by Michael Hayes

If you are to spend any considerable amount of time with a man, you may soon tell what it is that he loves. The people or things which occupy the life of his thoughts and his words. Our Lord spoke truly in the sixth chapter of Luke's Gospel when He said "for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."¹ Although some possess a temperament more reserved, while others seem to spew forth every word that passes through their mind unfettered, men are generally judged in the public square by their words. Everything from his complaints to his comforts, his vices and his virtues, his ailments and his aspirations he makes known with the things that he says. So then those things which occupy the preeminent place in our hearts soon reveal themselves through our daily speech.

This is true not only of our words, but of our walk. The old adage still carries with it a ring of truth, that actions speak louder than words. We are all too familiar with the false promises and facades of fellow men that have proven themselves faulty in the light of their actions. Perhaps we know this experientially, as light has been shed on our own hypocrisies, revealing this to be true of ourselves. Nevertheless, we know that trees bear fruit according to their kind. Our Lord posed the question, "Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"² The daily actions of someone reveal to us what they hold dear as much, if not more, than their words. We willingly reveal our affections for those things which hold the preeminent place in our hearts through our daily walk, and inevitably the things we treasure the most will come to surface and manifest themselves in due time.

In order for something to be preeminent it must be our foremost concern. It must be revered and adored above all else. It must occupy our utmost desires and be valued above all else. It cannot hold an equal, and it cannot be compared to. But alas, the things of the world and creature comforts that occupy this very throne in the hearts of many are far beyond number. From information to icons, objects to occupations, passions and pastimes, the idolatrous options are truly limitless. The great reformer of yesteryear rightly wrote that "*the human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual forge of idols.*"³ A man can make an idol of literally anything his depraved heart craves, and in doing so pledges to it his full allegiance and piles upon it his most heartfelt desire. Many have been the men and women who have lived and died in the vain pursuit of pleasure, wealth, power, and fame. Such is a wasted life, and one that never took heed to the wisdom of God's Holy Word (Psalm 49:17, Ecclesiastes 5:15, I Timothy 6:7).

There is, however, a higher calling that far transcends the plains of creaturely ambition, a noble and celestial pursuit wrought in the soul by the matchless power of the Spirit of Almighty God. This is that one and only affection of the soul that worthily engages the hearts of those bearing the image of their Creator. It is the joyfully conceded effort to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ with ones life, for the Scriptures testify:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.⁴

God has thus revealed to us by the pen of the Apostle that preeminence in every facet of our life belongs to One—the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Oh that we might love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)! One must heartily confess that all else, even all that is under the sun pales in comparison to the majesty of the One whom the heavenly elders cry, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."⁵

How then can we place any other at the head of our affections and admiration? Dear friends, might you give consideration to the path you are on? Are you marching along with the multitudes on the broad way of ease and comfort that passes swiftly into the lake of fire (this is that way which gives preeminence to all others), or have you been *converted*, and by the grace of God you find yourself having passed through that Gospel gate following after the Lamb (Matthew 7:12-14)? Repentance is the way, look at your life beloved. Examine the evidence (2 Corinthians 13:5) and if you see the fruit of evil all around you, know that there is repentance to be sought. Do not be deceived into thinking that there is anything earthly worth exchanging your soul (Matthew 16:26)! Only Jesus Christ is worthy of your full allegiance, and he is no cruel taskmaster. Trust in the Good Shepherd who testified truly that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30); surrender from self-reliance and believe His word today as He has revealed it, that you may be saved from the wrath to come. An old evangelist from Winston-Salem, Rolfe Barnard once remarked that "There's a lot of hell on the road to hell, but there's a lot of heaven on the road to heaven." And so it is, "the way of transgressors is hard,"⁶ but the one who lives life in the light and love of Jesus Christ and would have Him to be preeminent in all things, truly enjoys heaven on earth.

¹ Luke 6:45 ESV

² Matthew 7:16 ESV

³ John Calvin. Institutes of the Christian Religion: Translated by Henry Beveridge 1:11:55. Peabody, MA : Hendrickson, 2008.

⁴ Colossians 1:15-20 ESV

⁵ Revelation 4:11 ESV

⁶ Proverbs 13:15 KJV