

Daily Life with Christ. Love-20: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of love: Fragmented love (1).



(Online copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/032118.pdf> and <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

George: How does our fragmented desires undermine our proper love for God, others, and for ourselves?

Stephen: For one, love always includes some type of union with the object of love. We cannot have wholehearted union with God, or others, or ourselves, if we are inwardly divided. To put it another way, how can we have a wholehearted love for anyone if our hearts are divided?

George: Are you saying that our love for sin undermines our love for God?

Stephen: Yes, this is undeniable principle of reality as such and is explicitly declared in Scripture, for example, 1 John 2:15-16, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world.*

George: I can see that, but how does it apply to people and ourselves?

Stephen: Have you ever tried to talk to someone, to really connect, but they are distracted and not really listening?

George: Yes.

Stephen: Are they not distracted because of other concerns—we could call them other loves or interests that, at least for the moment, are valued as greater goods than you talking to them? As I noted before, all human beings are constantly drawn to what they love, which is simply what they view as their greatest good. While we are free to choose our goods/loves, no one is free

from seeking what he perceives as good—his loves. We are all obsessively loving beings in that we are always seeking what we see as our good.

George: I still think that we have an old sin nature in us. Scripture says that ‘the flesh lusts against the Spirit.’

Stephen: Right, but the ‘flesh’ is the lower sense level of you and I and every human being. It is not a thing, and entity, in us. We have to be careful not to make something real that the Scripture personifies. Sin is personified in Scripture. Through Realism one is oriented to being and can avoid taking literal certain figures of speech. For example, when Christ says He is the Door, we know that He is not a literal door because of the laws of being and non-contradiction: the nature of a door and Christ are different. Even if the old sin nature was a real entity in you, why do you choose its temptations? Don’t you choose sin because you see the sin as a good in some way? So, it still comes down to love, improper love in this case. The basic problem is not some old sin nature in you, the basic problem is your seeing sin as good in some way—your love for sin. This is undeniable. Can you give me one instance in the history of mankind where someone sinned because they had a distaste for that sin? Are you tempted to eat something you have a distaste for? So, even if there was an old sin nature thing in you, if you did not have an appetite for it you would not desire/love it. The problem is still that part of you has an improper appetite, a love, for sin and evil.

George: But there are things that I do choose that I hate. I do hate that I sin so much. I wish I did not have such sinful thoughts.

Stephen: I would argue that you have a hate-love relationship with sin. You hate it because you know that it is a rejection of God’s plan for your life, but you love it because in some way it is pleasurable. Your higher spiritual nature knows all too well that it is wrong, but on your sense level you are drawn to it as a good. We are all this way, we all live fragmented lives and this undermines our ability to love God, others, and ourselves properly. Our acts of sin and wrong done to others cause us to feel alienated from God, from others, and from ourselves.

George: Because of grace, we can simply ask God for forgiveness and be cleansed instantly!

Stephen: Yes, we can be restored to fellowship with Him. But that still does not solve the problem of fragmentation, which stems from improper love of our lower selves, generally our sense appetites. The basic problem continues to haunt us day in and day out. We still live divided selves, which precludes us from a proper love for ourselves. How can we truly and properly love ourselves when at the same time we hate and loathe parts of ourselves that love sin and evil? The only solution is sanctification wherein God transforms the lower sense desires by brings them in line with our higher natures. When this happens, we are freer to love God fully—with all our hearts, souls, and minds. How can we fully love God when part of us seeks and love things that God prohibits? How can we feel good about living in the presence of God in light of all of the commands to give ourselves wholly to Him, when part of ourselves really do want to give ourselves to other things instead of Him? How can we fully love others, if we are doing things we know they do not approve of? How can we properly love ourselves (as per spiritual self-esteem) when we continue to do what our truer and higher selves loathe and wish we would not

do? How can there be a peace in our hearts when we (lower sense self) loves what we hate (in our higher and true selves)?