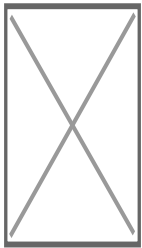


Breaking free of the chains—Part 1

In Process

by Glen Doss, Major –



What we love defines us.

Scripture is clear on this point. Common sense agrees, if we will allow ourselves the luxury of an honest self-examination. Yet, are we afraid of what we will find?

“For where your treasure is, there your heart is also,” says Christ, cutting to the chase with the precision of a surgeon’s knife. (Matt. 6:21) Paul follows up in Romans 8:5, observing, “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires.” In fact, this point is of such importance to God that he proclaims to Israel, amidst thunder and lightning, his preeminent commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Ex. 20:3)



But what am I to do if I dare to objectively examine myself and find what I was afraid I would find, i.e., that Christ is *not* on the throne of my life, that it is something *else* that I treasure more than I treasure him. For it is he who I am told to love with all my heart and mind and soul—him and no other. (Matt. 22:37-38)

From the perspective of an atheist (or of many secular academicians, at any rate), there is nothing I *can* do, for what I am is what I am bound to be—by virtue of my past. Like Pavlov’s dogs, I am still salivating, though the food put before me has long since vanished.

When I was studying social science in college (I was a professing atheist at the time), I became fascinated with the “nature or nurture” controversy, i.e., whether it is heredity or socialization that determines the kind of people we become. In the secular university classroom of the seventies there didn’t seem to be any question that one or the other—or more likely some combination of the two—determines the outcome of the human life. Free will or—heaven forbid we would even speculate on it—*God’s will* never entered our discussions. The character of one’s choices, we were taught, is already to a great extent determined by what occurred in the first years of life and by the temperament with which the person was born. It will continue to be influenced by the actions of others around the individual, by the events of the world in which one lives, and by the character of the society, but the

earliest years are by far the most formative. I had no problem at all with leaving God out of the picture entirely and, like those around me, would have ridiculed the mere suggestion of doing otherwise.

So how are these notions, these theories, impacted when we *do* put God into the picture? When at age 39 I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior and made a decision to turn my life and will over to his care—to the care of a God I had long denied existed—a whole new paradigm emerged. I saw the world through brand new lenses.

What does it mean to turn my life and will over to the care of God? Does this mean, as Christ implies, that I love him with all my heart and mind and soul? And what is my love for God, anyway? Is it a passion or is it simply a commitment that I make? Is the spiritual life merely a mental life, or do we let loose our feelings and love God deeply with all the fervor we can muster, with emotions which explode impulsively from within us?

In my previous column I mentioned that we sometimes find people who are emotional, who are excited, about everything *except* their faith. So what are the implications if I find that my passions are centered elsewhere? What, if anything, can I do about it?

Hard questions, but worth thinking about—until the New Year, where we will pick up on this discussion scrutinizing some insights gleaned from God's word.

Until then, may God bless you and yours this Christmas!