

SERMON ON GENESIS 8:12

Lessons: Gen. 8:12-22; John 8:31-47

A.C. 891, 892, 905

Rev. Theodore Pitcairn

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"And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, and she returned not again unto him any more." (Gen. 8:12)

He stayed yet other seven days, signifies a second holy state in which the Lord is still more manifestly present with man. And sent forth the dove signifies a new receiving of the goods and truths of faith. And she returned not again unto him any more, signifies a free state.

Concerning the free state signified by the dove not returning we read in the Third Lesson as follows:

"So long as he was in the ark, he was in a state of slavery... When man has been regenerated, he for the first time comes into a state of freedom, having before been in a state of slavery. It is slavery when cupidities and falsities rule, and freedom when the affections of the good and the true do so... When he is in a state of slavery, that is when cupidities and falsities rule, the man, who is under subjugation to them, supposes that he is in a state of freedom; but this is a gross falsity, for he is then carried away by the delight of cupidities and their pleasures, that is by the delights of his love, and because this is done by delights, it appears to him as freedom... It is quite unknown to very many what a life of freedom is... A life of freedom, or freedom, is simply and solely being led by the Lord." (A.C. 891, 2)

"The more present the Lord, the more free the man; that is, the more man is in the love of the good and the true, the more freely he acts. Such is the influx of the Lord through the angels. But on the other hand, the influx of hell through evil spirits is forcible and impetuous, striving to dominate, so that he may be nothing, and that they may be everything." (A.C. 905)

The above is a well known teaching in the New Church, and also known in the first Christian Church; for the Lord, when in the world taught as follows:

"If ye continue in My word ye shall be My disciples and the truth shall make you free... Amen, amen, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin... If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:30-36)

But while this truth is known, still it is not known, for it is not understood.

In general, those in the New Church think that they are in the truth and that they are therefore free, while others who do not have the truth, given by the Lord in His Second Coming, do not have the truth and are therefore not free. That this is a false idea is evident from this, that the freedom spoken of in our text, is one of the last states of regeneration; many states of reformation, temptation and regeneration have to be passed through before a man comes to this state of freedom. Few come to this state of freedom in this world, although, all who are being reformed or regenerated, come into this state of freedom in heaven.

When the Lord said, "The truth shall make you free", it is not meant that the knowledges of truth will make you free; for there are many who have an abundance of the knowledges of truth in their memory, who can speak about them intelligently, and can explain them maybe better than others, and yet who are by no means free, but are under the dominion of cupidities and falsities.

The truth, which makes you free, is not the truth in the memory, but the truth in the life. All truth continually flows into man from the Lord, and is received in the knowledges of truth which man has acquired from without,

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provided man lives the life of truth. The moment man does not live in the Lord, and the Lord in him, he is not in the truth, no matter how many knowledges of truth he has in his memory and which he thinks he believes in.

Man thinks he is free because he is unaware of the cupidities which dominate and enslave him. The only way to come out of this enslavement, is to come to see ones ruling love, to overcome it from the Lord, and then to receive a new ruling love from the Lord.

Few know what their ruling love is. Those, in faith alone, confess that they are entirely evil from head to toe, and that the Lord alone can save them; but they do not examine themselves to see their actual evils and repent of them; thus they remain in them.

Everyone knows he has faults, for, even if he has not practiced self examination, his faults have been pointed to by others. The danger is that we will think it is enough, to acknowledge that we are of ourselves in evil, and then try to overcome some of the external faults, for which we are criticized by others, and never search out our hidden loves. In this way there is little progress.

One is apt to escape from a real self examination by saying that it is impossible to know the state of ones interiors.

We read: "The presence of spirits with man is determined in accordance with their loves. Good spirits and angels are present with those who are in spiritual and celestial love; and this so much so that every one may know the quality of the spirits with him by merely observing the quality of his loves, or, what is the same, the quality of his ends; for every one has for an end that which he loves." (A.C. 4307)

The ruling love of every one is different from every one else, but these loves fall under general classes, and it is important to know what class we belong to; otherwise we are in the dark as to all things of our regeneration.

In general there are four classes of cupidities to which we may add a fifth.

The first class consists of those whose ruling love, is the desire for power, to have their own way, to dominate, even if it is only over their family or married partner.

The ruling love of the second class is wealth, either natural or spiritual.

The ruling love of the third class is pleasures, either refined, including, church services, the fine arts, refined conversation, and other similar things, or more external pleasures which are of many kinds.

The ruling love of the fourth class is a love of reputation, of being admired and praised, of being honored, adulated, and loved.

These loves, if subjugated and made to serve spiritual and celestial loves, are not evil, but when they rule they are the source of all evil. This is described as follows:

"The man who is in what is opposed to (the internal man) believes that, in order to his reception of eternal life, riches are to be renounced, as well as all pleasures of the body and of the world; such things being supposed to be opposed to spiritual life, whereas in themselves they are not so, but correspond, because they are means to an end, namely that the spiritual man may enjoy them so as to be able to perform the goods of charity, and may also live content in a healthy body... The ends alone are what cause the internal man and the external man either to be opposed or correspond... They who are not in what is opposed,

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act, speak, and acquire riches, and also enjoy pleasures, similar to those who are in what is opposed, in so much that in outward appearance they can scarcely be distinguished from each other. The reason is that their ends (or loves) distinguish them. The spirit of one who is in correspondance to the internal is fair and beautiful, such as is celestial love in form, but the spirit of the one with whom the external is opposed to the internal - however great may be the outward resemblance to the other, is black and ugly." (A.C. 3425)

Let us not take for granted we belong to the class of the fair and beautiful, for before regeneration, we do not belong to this class.

Above, we spoke of four classes of ruling loves. Everyone has something of all four classes of loves, but one type rules. It is not so difficult, as it might seem, to know which class of cupidities rules in us. For example if you have to choose would you sacrifice wealth for pleasure, or pleasure for wealth, or would you sacrifice both of these for power? Or maybe you would sacrifice, power, wealth and pleasure for the sake of reputation and honor. A man who does this latter might be in more danger, of not only deceiving the world, but also himself, in the idea that he was serving the spiritual or internal man, when in reality he was serving the more interior loves of self, hidden in the love of reputation.

We have spoken of a fifth class which might be added, but which is not so common: namely, those whose ruling love is a feeling of their own superiority either spiritually, morally or intellectually, out of which they despise others in comparison to themselves. Such may sacrifice dominion, wealth, pleasures, and even reputation, for the sake of a feeling of their own superiority in their own eyes; despising others, they may even despise the opinions that others hold concerning themselves.

Those who have an ambition for a monkish or saint like life may be of such a nature, although those who have the ambition to be saints more often have, as their ruling love, the love of reputation, or reward in the other life.

It is not so difficult to discover your ruling love as you might suppose. Reflect on what brings you the most happiness, what delights you most, what is your greatest joy, what is your idea of the joys of heaven? Is it due to spiritual or natural things? and what natural things? Also reflect on what displeases or disturbs you most, what makes you most indignant or angry, and, if you are honest with yourself, you can discover much.

We read above, that seen externally, the life of the good and the life of the evil may appear very similar. Thus we may be deceived as to others and as to ourselves. If we are unable to discover our ruling love by the above means, how can we know whether our ruling love is spiritual or merely natural? This we know from the Word; that, before regeneration, the natural rules over the spiritual. If therefore a man has not discovered his ruling love, and repented of it, he may know that the natural is ruling over the spiritual with him.

We can, I believe, all feel that we have not come to the free state in which the external serves the internal spontaneously and gladly, thus freely without restraint.

The question is are we progressing towards this end? Do we long for it with all our heart?

In the verses we are considering, we first read of the dove coming into a free state no longer imprisoned in the ark. It is not until the next state that Noah, his family, and the animals which were with him, left the ark and came into a state of freedom.

Genesis 8:12

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The truths of faith from good, represented by the dove, are the first things to become free. A man in this state freely and spontaneously, thinks concerning the truths of faith, out of love, and takes delight in the truths he perceives. But as yet his life in general is not free; he does not as yet spontaneously and with delight live an internal life, which the external freely serves. Such a life only comes in the following state, and is signified by the words: "And God spake unto Noah, Go forth from the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons wives with thee. Every wild animal that is with thee of all flesh as to fowl, and as to beast and as to every creeping thing." (Gen. 8:16, 17)

May we be inspired to overcome the slavery we are in, that we may live in the true of the Lord, and that the true may make us free.

AMEN