

“A Balanced Christian Life”
(Ephesians 4:17-32)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Edwards has been showing us how gracious affections will transform the whole man into the image of Christ.
 - a. It makes a permanent change in your disposition – from being averse to Christ, to making you want to be like Him.
 - b. It transforms your whole soul into His image:
 - (i) Especially in five areas, making you a humble, meek, loving, forgiving and merciful follower of the Lamb.
 - (ii) These are the five characteristics that are most obviously displayed in Christ’s work of redemption.

2. As we saw last week, grace also tends to soften the heart towards the things of the Lord.
 - a. The so-called “faith” of the hypocrite tends to harden his heart.
 - (i) What he really wants is heaven and his sin (and heaven only because he doesn’t want hell).
 - (ii) He wants Christ to be the Savior of his sins (to allow him to continue in it), rather than as a Savior from sin (which is what Jesus really is).
 - (iii) Once he believes he is secure from his sin, his heart is hardened against any idea that he is not saved or that he must give up his sin.

 - b. It’s just the opposite for the believer.
 - (i) Grace has turned your heart of stone into a heart of flesh.
 - (ii) The love that you now have for God makes you fearful of sin or anything that displeases Him.
 - (iii) This in turn makes you guard your heart more carefully than the fear of hell ever could.
 - (iv) It further softens your heart by strengthening the voice of your conscience – grace takes away the terrors of conscience (our fear of God’s judgment), but it strengthens the conviction of our conscience.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, we see one more way grace transform your life into the likeness of Christ: by producing in you a balanced holiness, a symmetrical spirituality.
 - a. In the same way that the Lord has created your body to be symmetrical – so that all your parts are proportional – so when He gives you the grace to put off the old man and put on the new, that new man, or that new principle of life in you, will be balanced, as it was in Jesus.
 - b. You do need to recognize at the outset that this doesn’t mean that you’ll be perfect.

- (i) There will always be things to throw you out of balance, such as the lack of grace, lack of knowledge, mistakes in judgment, natural dispositions, and any other way that your remaining corruption can introduce itself.
- (ii) But they will not throw you as far out of balance as what we see in false professors.
- (iii) When the Lord sanctifies you, He sanctifies you in the whole man, as He makes you more and more like Jesus Christ.

2. Tonight, we'll consider six things:
 - a. First, that gracious affections are balanced.
 - b. Second, that they will be balanced as to their objects – what it is you love.
 - c. Third, that your concern for mankind (one of the objects of your affections) will be balanced between both soul and body.
 - d. Fourth, that your concern for your own sins and those of others will be balanced.
 - e. Fifth, that all your affections will be balanced.
 - f. And finally, that your affections will be balanced both in public and private.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, gracious affections are balanced/symmetrical.
 1. This must be true since through them the Lord is transforming you into the image of His Son.
 - a. Gracious affections are the result of the Lord's Spirit dwelling in you, the same Spirit that dwelled in His fullness in Christ (John 1:14, 16).
 - b. Every grace the Lord possesses is being formed in you, and so you will have a symmetrical soul, as Christ did.
 2. Those who have a false grace are different.
 - a. All they have is flesh, or sin, which is unbalanced.
 - b. Whatever virtue they may seem to have, there will be a vice that will reveal that it's false – as Gerstner put it, when one avenue of sin is shut off so as to appear virtuous, another must open allowing sin to flow another direction.
 3. Here's how it works itself out in the lives of both:
 - a. In the saints there is both godly hope and godly fear: “The LORD favors those who fear Him, those who wait (or hope) for His lovingkindness” (Psalm 147:11).
 - (i) The fear of the Lord turns them from evil to the Lord and the hope He gives of final deliverance from it.
 - (ii) The hypocrite hopes for heaven, but he is not afraid of his sin.
 - b. Again, the saints have a godly joy that produces godly sorrow for their sins, as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4).
 - (i) Edwards writes, “Although Christ hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, so that we are freed from the sorrow of punishment, and may

now sweetly feed upon the comforts Christ hath purchased for us; yet that hinders not but that our feeding on these comforts should be attended with the sorrow of repentance. As of old, the children of Israel were commanded, evermore to feed upon the paschal lamb, with bitter herbs.”

- (ii) Hypocrites experience a joy that is the opposite of godly fear, that actually encourages them to sin – freedom from judgment produces a joy which for them is the freedom to sin.
- (iii) If you are a saint, your affections will be spiritually balanced.

B. Not only the affections themselves, but also the objects of your affections will be balanced.

1. Hypocrites are out of balance as to the object of their affections.

- a. They say they have a great love for God and Jesus Christ, but yet don't seem to have much love for others.
 - (i) They tend to be envious, bitter and vengeful.
 - (ii) They don't seem to take the Lord's command very seriously, "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you" (Luke 6:31).
 - (iii) They may show love and affection to some, but are hard and bitter towards others, especially to those not of their particular party or group, or to those who don't like them.
 - (iv) They may be concerned for the salvation of one, but not for another.
- b. There are also those who seem to be kind and considerate towards others, but don't appear to have any love for God: they don't spend time with Him, worship Him publicly or privately, or submit to His commandments.

2. The saints, on the other hand, love both God and man.

- a. You love God most of all and seek to love Him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.
- b. And you love men, as the Lord commands you, "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:46-48).
- c. If you are a believer, your affections will be balanced.

C. And with regard to your neighbor, your love for him will also be balanced: for both his body and soul.

1. This won't be the case with the insincere believer.

- a. They might minister to their physical needs – giving their time and resources to help them – but show no love for their souls – being unwilling to reprove or admonish them regarding the things they are doing that will eventually destroy them.
- b. Others are just the opposite: they're willing to pray and admonish others, but not to meet their physical needs.

2. A genuine believer will be concerned for both the soul and the body.
 - a. When Jesus preached the Gospel, He also healed their diseases and fed them on various occasions (Mark 6:34ff) – not just for a sign, but also to meet needs.
 - b. If Christ is being formed in you, you will also be concerned for both of man’s needs.
- D. You will also have a balanced concern for your own sins as well as the sins of others.
1. Again, the unconverted are out of balance here.
 - a. They can see the sins of others, but don’t seem to be able to see their own.
 - b. As Jesus warns us, “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:3-5).
 2. A true believer will be concerned by the sins he sees in other saints, but at the same time, he will be more affected by what he sees in himself.
 - a. He will take the log out of his own eye before attempting to minister to the speck in his brother’s eye.
 - b. He will first consider his own sins before attempting to bear his brother’s burden, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2).
 - c. If you are a true believer, your affections will be balanced.
- E. There will be a symmetry to all our affections: one will not be terribly out of balance with the others.
1. Such as with holy desire.
 - a. Those with counterfeit affections will focus on things that are unimportant or even false, and neglect what’s really important.
 - (i) Some love to talk about their religious experiences and tell others that they should experience the same things (such as with some Charismatics).
 - (ii) At the same time they neglect true spirituality: such as pouring your souls out to the Lord in secret prayer, public worship, growth in grace, and living more for His glory.
 - b. If you are a saint, you will have a biblical balance or genuine spirituality.
 2. The same is true with hatred and zeal.
 - a. Gracious affections oppose all sin: “From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way” (Psalm 119:104).
 - b. But counterfeit affections only oppose some sins.

- (i) Some express opposition to the evils in our society – such as abortion, homosexuality, or adultery – but not to their personal sins.
 - (ii) If they really hated sin, they would hate the sin in themselves and be just as zealous against it.
 - (iii) A gracious zeal targets its own sin first and seeks to put it to death, before it addresses the sins of others.
 - (iv) If you have a genuine faith, your hatred of sin will be balanced.
3. Gracious affections also create steadfastness in the faith.
- a. There will be some unsteadiness – times when you are spiritually weaker than others and less committed to walk with the Lord – yet your heart will be steadfast, trusting in the Lord (Psa. 112:7). As Job said, “Nevertheless the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger” (Job 17:9).
 - b. Edwards writes, “If therefore persons are religious only by fits and starts; if they now and then seem to be raised up to the clouds in their affections, and then suddenly fall down again, lose all, and become quite careless and carnal, and this is their manner of carrying on religion; if they appear greatly moved, and mightily engaged in religion, only in extraordinary seasons, in the time of a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit, or other uncommon dispensation of providence, or upon the real or supposed receipt of some great mercy, when they have received some extraordinary temporal mercy, or suppose that they are newly converted, or have lately had what they call a great discovery; but quickly return to such a frame, that their hearts are chiefly upon other things, and the prevailing bent of their hearts and stream of their affections, is ordinarily towards the things of this world; when they are like the children of Israel in the wilderness, who had their affections highly raised by what God had done for them at the Red Sea, and sang his praise, and soon fell a lusting after the fleshpots of Egypt; but then again, when they came to Mount Sinai, and saw the great manifestations God made of himself there, seemed to be greatly engaged again, and mightily forward to enter into covenant with God, saying, ‘All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient,’ but then quickly made them a golden calf; I say, when it is thus with persons, it is a sign of the unsoundness of their affections.”
 - c. Gracious affections produce a steadfast faith.
- F. Finally, a true believer’s affections will be balanced whether in public or private.
- 1. False believers are very zealous when they have an audience, but not when they’re alone.
 - a. Shepard writes, “The Lord is neglected secretly, yet honored openly; because there is no wind in their chambers to blow their sails, and therefore there they stand still. Hence many men keep their profession, when they lose their affection. They have by the one a name to live (and that is enough) though their hearts be dead. And hence so long as you love and commend them, so long they love you; but if not, they will forsake you. They were warm only

- by another's fire, and hence, having no principle of life within, soon grow dead. This is the water that turns a Pharisee's mill" (*Parable*, 1:180).
- b. Flavel writes, "The hypocrite . . . is not for the closet, but the synagogue, Matt. 6:5, 6. It is not his meat and drink to retire from the clamor of the world, to enjoy God in secret" (*Touchstone of Sincerity*, Chap. 7 Sect. 2).
2. Again, the true believer is balanced: you will glorify God both in public and private.
- a. William Ames tells us that true grace may be known by the fact, "That persons be obedient in the absence, as well as in the presence of lookers on; in secret, as well, yea more, than in public" (*Cases of Conscience*, 3:5).
 - b. You will desire both fellowship with other Christians, but also time to be alone with God.
 - (i) Consider all the times Jesus spent time alone with His Father.
 - (ii) David writes of the secret joy he had in the Lord, "When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, for You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy" (Psalm 63:6-7).
 - (iii) The Lord generally revealed Himself and His mercy to His saints when they were alone. Abraham was alone when the Lord made His covenant with him. Jacob was alone praying when he wrestled with Christ and obtained His blessing. God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush when he was alone in the wilderness at Mount Horeb (Ex. 3). God gave Moses His commandments when he was alone with Him for forty days and nights on that mountain. When Jesus revealed the greatest revelation of His coming glory on the mountain in His transfiguration, it was when He had taken three of His disciples apart from the multitude. Mary Magdalene was alone when Christ first appeared to her after the resurrection. And John was alone on the island of Patmos when the Lord revealed to him His future plan for Israel and the Church.
 - (iv) Certainly, the Lord has also blessed and will bless His people when they are together in fellowship and worship. But as much as you will love to be with other Christians, you will delight more to be with God in secret.
 - (v) If you are spiritual in public, but not private, you should suspect that your faith isn't genuine.
 - (vi) Edwards writes, "So that if persons appear greatly engaged in social religion, and but little in the religion of the closet, and are often highly affected when with others, and but little moved when they have none but God and Christ to converse with, it looks very darkly upon their religion."
 - (vii) Examine your life – taking into account the unbalancing effects of sin – to see if your love is producing a balanced Christian life. Amen.