

“More Desirable than Gold”
(Psalm 19)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we considered that to see God, we must follow His directions.
 - a. He’s the only One who can tell us how to do so.
 - b. “Your Word is a lamp to my path and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).
 - c. And that light has shone most fully in Christ, “Who shall lead me through the wilderness? There are many ways, many false ways, many cross ways, and but one that is the right way: How shall I hit my way to heaven, the right way that leads [there]? And who will show me and lead me in this way? Here Trust answers, Christ will do it; I lean upon Him to be my Moses to lead me in the way that I should go: ‘You will guide me with Your counsel,’ (Ps. 73:24). Christ has gone the way before His saints, and He will show them His steps to direct them” (Richard Alleine, *Day by Day*, 235).
 - d. This is what the author to the Hebrews meant, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).
 - (i) Those who came before us followed Him.
 - (ii) They are pointing us in the same direction.
2. But as Edwards reminded us, we need more than just a head full of knowledge.
 - a. We must also *desire* to follow Him as He speaks to us in His Word.
 - b. “Our path should be as “the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day” (Pro. 4:18). We ought to be hungering and thirsting after righteousness: after an increase in righteousness. ‘As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the work, that ye may grow thereby’ (1 Pet. 2:2). The perfection of heaven should be our mark. ‘This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus’ (Phil. 3:13, 14)” (“The True Christian’s Life a Journey toward Heaven”).

B. Preview.

1. This evening, I want us to think a bit more about the importance of desiring the Word.
 - a. To do anything, we must want to do it; affections are what move us.
 - b. Again, Edwards, “The Author of the human nature has not only given us affections, but has made them very much the spring of actions. As the

affections do not only necessarily belong to the *human nature*, but are a very *great part* of it; so (inasmuch as by regeneration persons are renewed in the whole man, and sanctified throughout) *holy affections* do not only necessarily belong to *true religion*, but are a very great part of it. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and God hath so constituted the human nature, that the affections are very much the spring of men's actions, this also shows, that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Such is man's nature, that he is very inactive, any otherwise than he is influenced by some affection, either *love* or *hatred*, *desire*, *hope*, *fear*, or some other. These affections we see to be the springs that set men agoing, in all the affairs of life, and engage them in all their pursuits: these are the things that put men forward, and carry them along, in all their worldly business; and especially are men excited and animated by these, in all affairs wherein they are earnestly engaged, and which they pursue with vigor. We see the world of mankind to be exceeding busy and active; and the affections of men are the springs of the motion: take away all *love* and *hatred*, all *hope* and *fear*, all *anger*, *zeal*, and affectionate *desire*, and the world would be, in a great measure motionless and dead; there would be no such thing as activity amongst mankind, or any earnest pursuit whatsoever. It is affection that engages the covetous man, and him that is greedy of worldly profits, in his pursuits; and it is by the affections, that the ambitious man is put forward in pursuit of worldly glory; and it is the affections also that actuate the voluptuous man, in his pursuit of pleasure and sensual delights: the world continues, from age to age, in a continual commotion and agitation, in a pursuit of these things, but take away all affection, and the *spring* of all this motion would be gone, and the motion itself would cease. And as in worldly things, worldly affections are very much the spring of men's motion and action; so in religious matters, the spring of their actions is very much religious affection: he that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is *engaged* in the business of religion" (*Religious Affections*).

c. To know the Word is not enough, we must also desire to do it or we won't.

2. But what will make us desire it more? There are two answers:

- a. The work of the Holy Spirit showing us it's intrinsic value.
- b. The work of the Spirit showing us it's practical value.
- c. Both are important to us; both can stir the affections; so we'll want to consider both this evening.
- d. Psalm 19 speaks of both kinds of revelation: General (vv. 1-6) and Special (vv. 7-14).
 - (i) God reveals Himself in both.
 - (ii) But more particularly in His Word.
 - (iii) Tonight, we'll focus on desiring the Word.

II. Sermon. So why should we desire it?

A. First, for its intrinsic value (vv. 7-10).

1. Since it is God's Word, it shares His attributes.
 - a. The Word of God is, in a sense, one of His attributes.
 - b. It is His Logos, His reasoning.
 - c. Jesus is called the Logos, the Word.
 - d. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).
 - e. Therefore, it shares the characteristics of God.

2. What are those attributes?
 - a. It is perfect/complete/sound (v.7).
 - b. It is sure/confirmed/established (v. 7).
 - c. It is right/upright/righteous (v. 8).
 - d. It is pure/sincere (v. 8).
 - e. It produces fear which is morally pure (v. 9).
 - f. It endures forever (v. 9).
 - g. It is true/reliable/faithful (v. 9).
 - h. It is righteous (v. 9).
 - i. More desirable than much fine gold (v. 10).
 - j. Sweeter than honey (v. 10).

3. Believers love God's Word for the same things they love in God.
 - a. It is the revelation of His mind, of His morality, of His perfection.
 - b. It shares His divine glory.
 - c. If the believer loves God, he will love His Word.
 - d. This is why David describes the Law as "more desirable than much fine gold" and "sweeter than honey."
 - e. Listen to Edwards own experience when God revealed this sweetness to him: "From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. But I never could give an account how, or by what means, I was thus convinced, not in the least imagining at the time, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it. However, my mind rested in it; and it put an end to all those cavils and objections. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, with respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense, in God showing mercy to whom he will show mercy, and hardening whom he will. God's absolute sovereignty and justice, with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seems to rest assured of, as much as of any thing that I see with my eyes; at least it is so at times. But I have often, since that

first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God's sovereignty that I had then. I have often since had not only a conviction, but a *delightful* conviction. The doctrine has very often appeared exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my first conviction was not so.

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, 1 Tim. 1:17, "Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen." As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven; and be as it were swallowed up in him forever! I kept saying, and as it were singing, over these words of Scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him; and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do, with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my thought, that there was any thing spiritual, or of a saving nature, in this.

From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. An inward, sweet sense of these things, at times, came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. And my mind was greatly encouraged to spend my time in reading and meditating on Christ, on the beauty and excellency of his person, and the lovely way of salvation by free grace in him. I found no books so delightful to me, as those that treated of these subjects. Those words, Song. 2:1, used to be abundantly with me, "I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys." The words seemed to me sweetly to represent the loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ. The whole book of Canticles used to be pleasant to me, and I used to be much in reading it, about that time; and found, from time to time, an inward sweetness, that would carry me away in my contemplations. This I know not how to express otherwise, than by a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from all the concerns of this world; and sometimes a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations, of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and rapt and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart; an ardor of soul that I know not how to express" (*Personal Narrative*).

- f. Now listen to his explanation of this experience as he defines love to God: "Divine love, as it has God for its object, may be thus described. It is the soul's relish of the supreme excellency of the divine nature, inclining the heart to God as the chief good.

The first thing in divine love, and that from which everything that appertains to it arises, is a relish of the excellency of the divine nature; which the soul of man by nature has nothing of.

The first effect that is produced in the soul, whereby it is carried above what it has or can have by nature, is to cause it to relish or taste the sweetness of the divine relation. That is the first and most fundamental thing in divine love, and that from which everything else that belongs to divine love naturally and necessarily proceeds. When once the soul is brought to relish the excellency of the divine nature, then it will naturally, and of course, incline to God every way. It will incline to be with him and to enjoy him. It will have benevolence to God. It will be glad that he is happy. It will incline that he should be glorified, and that his will should be done in all things. So that the first effect of the power of God in the heart in regeneration, is to give the heart a divine taste or sense; to cause it to have a relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the divine nature; and indeed this is all the immediate effect of the divine power that there is, this is all the Spirit of God needs to do, in order to a production of all good effects in the soul. ---If God, by an immediate act of his, gives the soul a relish of the excellency of his own nature, other things will follow of themselves without any further act of the divine power than only what is necessary to uphold the nature of the faculties of the soul. He that is once brought to see, or rather to taste, the superlative loveliness of the Divine Being, will need no more to make him long after the enjoyment of God, to make him rejoice in the happiness of God, and to desire that this supremely excellent Being may be pleased and glorified. And if this be true, then the main ground of true love to God is the excellency of his own nature, and not any benefit we have received, or hope to receive, by his goodness to us. Not but that there is such a thing as a gracious gratitude to God for mercies bestowed upon us; and the acts and fruits of his goodness to us may be, and very often are, occasions and incitements of the exercise of true love to God, as I must show more particularly hereafter. But love or affection to God, that has no other good than only some benefit received or hoped for from God, is not true love. If it be without any sense of a delight in the absolute excellency of the divine nature, it has nothing divine in it. Such gratitude towards God requires no more to be in the soul than human nature that all men are born with, or at least that human nature well cultivated and improved, or indeed not further vitiated and depraved than it naturally is. It is possible that natural men, without the addition of any further principle than they have by nature, may be affected with gratitude by some remarkable kindness of God to them, as that they should be so affected with some great act of kindness of a neighbor. A principle of self-love is all that is necessary to both. But divine love is a principle distinct from self-love, and from all that arises from it. Indeed, after a man is come to relish the sweetness of the supreme good there is in the nature of God, self-love may have a hand in an appetite after the enjoyment of that good. For self-love will necessarily make a man desire to enjoy that which is sweet to him. But God's perfections must first savor appetite and be

sweet to men, or they must first have a taste to relish sweetness in the perfection of God, before self-love can have any influence upon them to cause an appetite after the enjoyment of that sweetness. And therefore that divine taste or relish of the soul, wherein divine love doth most fundamentally consist, is prior to all influence that self-love can have to incline us to God; and so must be a principle quite distinct from it, and independent of it” (*Treatise on Grace*).

- g. All this is to say that the believer will desire the Word and desire to follow it because they love what they see of God’s glory in it.

B. But they will also desire it for its practical value (vv. 7-14).

1. There are blessings attached to it:
 - a. It restores the soul (v. 7).
 - b. It teaches wisdom to the naïve (v. 7).
 - c. It rejoices the heart (v. 8).
 - d. It illumines our minds (v. 8).
 - e. It warns us against evil (v. 11).
 - f. Keeping the commandments brings reward (v. 11).
 - g. It uncovers hidden sins (v. 12).
 - h. It restrains from willful sin (v. 13).
 - i. It shows the way to have the power of sin broken (v. 13).
 - j. It shows the blameless way (v. 13).
 - k. It leads the way to forgiveness (v. 13).
 - l. In short, it shows us how to live a life pleasing to God (v. 14).
 - m. That we might obtain, through Christ, the blessed sight of our Savior.

2. Let me close with these words of Christopher Nesse, “That you have the Word of God to read and hear, you must prize as a precious privilege, and praise the Lord for it with your heart, lips, and life. God has deposited a rich treasure with you in lending you His Word and Gospel. You might have been begging drops of mercy in hell at this time, when behold God offers you oceans of grace on earth in His Word and Gospel. O what would the damned give (even ten thousand worlds if they had them) to enjoy such means of grace (yes but one day thereof) and such days of salvation as are bestowed upon you; God has not dealt so with many nations, nor with many persons, as He has dealt with you in the land of your nativity (Ps. 147:19-20). It was a special favor and vouchsafement to Israel, that God committed to them the lively (and life-giving) oracles (Rom. 3:2). It is truly a choice talent, a matter of great trust, to know your Master’s will. There is much in that of Luke 12:48; ‘Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.’ The poor pagan would lay under a long night of darkness (having only the twinkling starlight of the fallen nature) wherein they wander woefully, yet not so wide as to miss of hell. Their starlight indeed leaves them inexcusable (Rom. 1:20), but it cannot lead them to the star of Jacob, the bright Morning Star, nor to life and salvation (Acts 4:12) (“Hearing the Word”).

3. You have it, so treasure it. Amen.