"Not All Affections Are Gracious, Part 1"
(Exodus 19:1-8)

I. Introduction.
  A. Orientation.
    1. True religion, the religion that saves, is primarily a matter of the heart.
      a. When the Spirit regenerates you, when He unites you to Christ, He changes the disposition of your hearts.
      b. You no longer love sin, but now you love righteousness.
      c. You no longer hate God and Christ, but now you love them.
      d. You're no longer adverse to the Word of God and worship, but now you give ourselves to them.
      e. This change of direction, of inclination, is not weak, but strong: this is what religious affections are all about.

    2. We saw this was true:
      a. Of David, who wrote: "O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Ps. 63:1).
      b. Of Paul, who said, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8).
      c. Most importantly, of Christ, who said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34).
      d. True Christianity is a matter of love – not merely of knowledge, or of belief that the facts are true – but of loving and trusting in the Son of God, who loved you and gave Himself up for you.
      e. This is also why the Lord ordains that we worship Him the way we do – through praise, prayer and hearing the Word explained and applied – because these things tend to strengthen our affections for Him.

  B. Preview.
    1. You mustn't think that having a strong love or zeal for the Lord is fanaticism.
      a. That you shouldn't go overboard, but do all things in moderation, including being only moderately in love with Christ.
      b. True Christianity is all about having a heart that is white hot for Christ.

    2. On the other hand, you need to understand that not all strong affections or desires in your heart – even in the things of Christ – are necessarily gracious.
      a. Just because you're strongly moved by something doesn't mean that grace is what's moving you.

b. Tonight we're going to look at four things that can be true both of genuine Christians and non-Christians, which means though we should be experiencing these things, we don't want to base our assurance on them.
c. They are:
(i) Strong affections.
(ii) Affections that are so strong they affect our bodies.
(iii) Affections that move us to talk a great deal and convincingly about our experiences.
(iv) And affections we can't rationally account for.

II. Sermon.
A. First, just because your affections are strong doesn't mean they're gracious.
1. There are those who want to eliminate affections/strong desires from a genuine Christian experience.
a. But as we've already seen, if grace primarily reveals itself in the affections, then the more grace you have, the stronger your affections will be –
(i) The stronger your love will be for the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.
(ii) The stronger your hatred and sorrow will be for sin.
(iii) The greater your thankfulness will be for what the Father has done for you in Christ.
(iv) The deeper your humility will be over the sins you committed that brought about His death.

b. Isn't this what Peter is taking about when he says, "And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8)?
c. Isn't this what the Lord means when He says He will write His Law on your heart?
(i) That His grace will cause you to love Him with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, as our meditation reminded us?
(ii) This certainly was the experience of David, Paul, the saints and angels in heaven, and, of course, Jesus Himself.

2. On the other hand, having strong affections doesn't necessarily mean that you have a gracious heart. There are examples in Scripture of strong affections that aren't gracious.
a. The Galatians at one time were ready to pluck out their eyes and give them to Paul, if that would have helped him; but shortly after that were ready to place their trust in their circumcision, abandoning justification by faith, so that Paul was afraid that they had believed in vain (Gal. 4:15). At one time, they had a very strong love for Paul, but at another were ready to abandon him and the Gospel.
b. Our text reminds us that the Israelites appeared to have a strong love for the Lord when He brought them out of Egypt and saved them from the pursuing

Egyptians (Ex. 19:1-8). Yet these same people quickly turned away from God and began worshiping a golden calf (Ex. 32).

c. There were many who were strongly affected when Lazarus was raised from the dead, who were also praising Jesus when He entered Jerusalem. John tells us, "So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify *about Him*. For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign" (12:17-18). Shortly after that, these same people cried out for His crucifixion.

d. Just because you experience strong affection doesn't mean you have saving grace.

e. We'll see later that what really matters is the object of our affections.

B. Second, just because your affections are so strong that they affect your body, doesn't mean they're gracious.

1. We considered before that strong affections have a strong affect on the body, because of the union of body and soul.
   a. When you have a strong love for someone, you can feel it in your body.
   b. When you're afraid, it can cause chills.
   c. The stronger the affection, the stronger its affect on the body.
   d. This is especially true of gracious affections, because the Spirit is strong and our bodies are weak.
      (i) David spoke of a thirst he felt for God when in the wilderness, separated from the visible symbols of God's presence (Ps. 63:1).
      (ii) The psalmist, in Psalm 119, wrote that the presence of the Lord made his body tremble, "My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments" (v. 120).
      (iii) Both Daniel and the Apostle John, when they saw Christ, fell down and became like a dead man because they had no strength left (Dan. 10:8; Rev. 1:17).
      (iv) Strong affections can have strong affects on the body.

2. On the other hand, just because your body is strongly affected doesn't mean these affects are caused by God's grace.
   a. Have you every seen non-Christians affected by strong emotions?
      (i) What about football players who score winning touchdowns?
      (ii) Or investors who see their stocks double in value?
      (iii) Or the mother whose child is saved from a burning building?
      (iv) They experience strong sensations in their bodies, but there's nothing gracious about this.

   b. Have you ever been a part of a charismatic or Pentecostal church and seen people having physical experiences?
      (i) People being "slain in the Spirit" and falling over.

(ii) If you've ever watched Benny Hinn on television, you've probably seen men and women convulsing on the stage, supposedly put in that condition by the Holy Spirit.

c. Just because you experience strong physical effects, even if they're caused by the means of grace – His Word, prayer, praise – doesn't necessarily mean the Spirit is at work in a saving way, or at all.

C. Third, just because you get excited about the things of the Lord and can talk about them intelligently and comprehensively, with conviction and zeal, doesn't mean you have grace.

1. It's true that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34).
   a. When you get excited about something you talk about it a lot.
   b. Those who were healed by Christ and were delivered from their sins by His grace talked a great deal about Him. The man who had the legion in him wanted to go with Jesus after He had delivered him – doubtless because he loved Him and wanted to tell others about Him – but Jesus wanted him to direct his efforts first towards his own people, since those who knew him would be more strongly affected by this miracle: "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19).
   c. I'm sure each of you talked a lot about your conversion when you first came to know Jesus, and hopefully you still do.

2. But you shouldn't base your confidence of heaven on this.
   a. John's baptism was the center of the Jews' conversation for a while. They were willing to rejoice in his light for a season (John 5:35).
   b. The same was true about Jesus' ministry. During the year of His popularity everyone in Judea was speaking about Him. They were astonished at His teaching. They receive His word with joy. They followed Him day and night, without eating, drinking and sleeping. One time they fasted for three days just to follow Him into the wilderness. But later they cried out for His death.
   c. Just because the things of the Lord fill your minds and hearts, so that you're constantly talking about them, doesn't mean you have grace.

D. Finally, just because you experience affections that you don't really know where they came from, doesn't make them gracious.

1. Some can't explain why they're experiencing the affections they are and think they must come from the Holy Spirit.
   a. Now it's true that when the Spirit works through the means of grace and saves you, you will experience things you can't account for – a love, a joy, a delight in things that didn't thrill you at all before, things you may even have hated.
   b. The Scripture represents the new birth as a resurrection, as life from the dead.
      (i) You receive something so entirely new you had nothing of it at all before.

(ii) The Lord makes it this way because He wants you to know that this work is His, it's not something you did, something you worked up in your flesh (1 Cor. 1:27-29), so that He might receive all the glory (Isa. 1:11-17; 2 Cor. 4:7).

(iii) When the Lord brought salvation to His people from their enemies in the Old Covenant, He did it in such a way that they might see that it was His hand alone that saved them.

(a) Consider how He delivered His people from Goliath and the Philistines through the hand of a youth, named David.

(b) Or how He destroyed the Midianites through Gideon and his army of 300 armed with trumpets, lamps and pitchers.

(iv) Paul prayed that God might show the Ephesian believers the exceeding greatness of His power towards those who believe. This was certainly something he wanted them to *experience*.

2. On the other hand, you don't always know why you experience the things you do.
   a. Certainly, everything you experience is not from the Holy Spirit.
   b. There are other spirits that can influence your minds and hearts.
   c. That's why Scripture tells us to try the spirits to see if they are from God.
   d. Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light in order to deceive you.
   e. There are many instances in the history of the church where men were driven into excesses thinking they were following God. Edwards' own uncle committed suicide thinking God told him to do so, and by doing so, put an end to the first Great Awakening.
   f. There is also the common work of the Spirit that may seem like the saving work of the Spirit, but which falls short of the character of that work (Heb. 6:4-5).
   g. Strong affections, affections that have an effect on your body, affections that cause you to talk convincingly, and affections you can't account for, may be signs that you have saving grace; but on the other hand, they may not.
   h. The point is, don't place your hope of heaven on these things.
   i. Next week, we'll consider more of these marks that may or may not show us that we are believers. Amen.