

“Not All Affections Are Gracious, Part 2”
(Matthew 13:20-21)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We've seen that genuine grace will produce holy affections.
 - a. Love is the most important, for it is out of love that everything else we read about in Scripture flows.
 - b. It will be a strong love – for that is what affection means: not something that raises us a little above indifference, but a strong inclination.
 - c. And it will be a holy love for God and the things that have most to do with Him, the things closest to Him, such as His Son, His Word, His Law/ways, His worship, His people.
 - d. All true grace produces affections in the heart.
2. But on the other hand, not all affections are gracious.
 - a. Just because our hearts are strongly moved or inclined towards something doesn't mean grace is what inclines it, even if the things affecting us are religious or have to do with Christ.
 - b. This is why we must beware of counterfeit grace.
 - c. For instance, what would you conclude about your spiritual condition if you experienced:
 - (i) A strong joy when you thought about Jesus Christ?
 - (ii) A joy so strong that it affected your body – caused you to swoon or to pass out while worshiping Him?
 - (iii) A joy and delight that made you want to talk about Him all the time?
 - (iv) And yet a joy you couldn't explain – you didn't know where it came from?
 - d. You might conclude that you were a genuine Christian, until you realized:
 - (i) The Jews who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead wondered deeply about Him and experienced joy.
 - (ii) They were so moved by the event, they told everyone they could until the whole city knew what He had done.
 - (iii) They rejoiced when He entered into Jerusalem and sang His praises.
 - (iv) Yet later when He was put on trial, they disowned Him and asked for a murderer to be released in His place.
 - (v) Professing Christians swoon and pass out all the time when Benny Hinn touches them or even looks at them, but there's nothing of the Spirit in it.
 - (vi) If you're a true believer, you will experience things like these, but just because you experience these things doesn't mean you're a Christian.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, we're going to look at two more ways in which affections can appear to be gracious, but not be gracious.

2. We'll see:
 - a. First, that just because your affections come from different passages of Scripture or with different passages, doesn't mean they're gracious.
 - b. Second, that just because you seem to experience love for the Father and the Son, doesn't mean it comes from the Spirit's saving work in your heart.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, just because your affections come from different passages of Scripture or with different passages, doesn't mean they're gracious.
 1. Certainly, your love, joy and humility may be gracious, when these things are caused by Scripture.
 - a. You don't necessarily need to be reading the Bible; it can happen when you simply hear Biblical truth being taught.
 - b. Scriptural truth is supposed to affect your heart, to move your affections – it is the Word of your Lord, the expression of His everlasting love towards you; it is full of His promises that should give you hope; the Spirit works through the Word to produce gracious affections in your heart.
 - c. He also brings passages of Scripture to mind during times when you need comfort or guidance the most.
 - d. When this happens, it can and should move your heart.
 - e. You should be more concerned if your heart isn't moved at all – Scripture tells us that you should beware of having a hard heart, a heart that isn't moved by God's Word.
 2. But simply because you experience different affections when you read the Word or hear it read – whether love or fear or hope or joy or sorrow – that doesn't mean the Spirit caused this to happen.
 - a. Some believe that when Scripture verses occur to them, it must be the Spirit's work, especially when the verses seem to come spontaneously, when they come one after the other and seem to fit their situation, when they don't remember having read those passages before, and when these verses bring joy to their hearts.
 - b. The problem is there is nothing in Scripture that tells us this is a sure sign of saving grace.
 - (i) Satan can very likely suggest texts of Scripture to your minds and misapply them.
 - (ii) If he is able to tempt you to dwell on evil thoughts, he can certainly make you think of Scripture.
 - (iii) He will even use Scripture to try and deceive you.
 - (a) Scripture is holy, but that doesn't mean Satan won't use it.
 - (b) He used the Word to try to deceive and tempt Jesus in the wilderness to turn the stones into bread and to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple.
 - (c) If God allowed him to tempt Jesus, then shouldn't you suspect that God will allow either him or one of his demons to tempt you?
 - (d) And if he can use one passage of Scripture, why can't he use others?
 - (e) Why wouldn't he be able to use those passages that offer comfort to those who shouldn't have comfort in order to deceive them?

- (f) He wants nothing more than to deceive those who shouldn't have assurance into thinking they do, so that he can destroy them.
 - (g) Peter tells us that the devil's messengers – the false prophets and heretical teachers – use and pervert Scripture to their own and others' damnation (2 Pet. 3:16). If they can do this, and use all of Scripture to do it, why can't the devil?
- (iv) And if the devil can use Scripture in this way, why not your indwelling sin? Our sinful hearts share the same nature as the devil, so they too can deceive us.
 - (v) And what about the common work of the Spirit?
 - (a) The author to the Hebrews tells us of several things unbelievers can experience that are like those of believers, but are still only His common work.
 - (b) "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame" (6:4-6).
 - (c) Isn't it possible that this could mislead you regarding your spiritual state?
 - c. All this is to say that just because your heart is moved by the Scripture, or that several passages come to your mind that apply so well to your situation bringing hope and comfort, this doesn't necessarily mean that it comes from God: It may be from Satan, or from your flesh, or from the common work of the Spirit.
 - d. The stony ground hearers received the Word with joy and seemed to be growing spiritually, but they didn't really love the Lord and so fell away from Him when difficult times came.
 - e. You can't base your assurance on this evidence alone.
- B. Second, just because you seem to experience love for the Father and the Son, doesn't mean that this love is a saving work of the Spirit.
- 1. No Christian would argue that loving God and Jesus Christ would argue against their having a gracious work of the Spirit.
 - a. We should love them with all our heart, mind, soul and strength; more than father, mother, husband, wife, children, possessions; we should be willing to lay down our lives for them.
 - b. This is the essence of the work of the Spirit in the heart of a true believer.
 - 2. But there are those who say that "any" love they experience for God is from the sanctifying and saving work of the Spirit.
 - a. The reason they say this is that Satan can't love.
 - (i) His heart is full of hatred and cruelty; love is the opposite of his nature.
 - (ii) Edwards has shown us that there is nothing more excellent than true Christian love to God and men; it is better than all the spiritual gifts – knowledge, prophecy, miracles, speaking with the tongues of men and angels – it is the

most important of all the graces and the essence of true religion; it is what makes you as a believer most like God and most unlike the devil.

- (iii) Why would Satan ever want to counterfeit love?
- b. The reason is because it is the most effective thing he can do to destroy you.
 - (i) Isn't it true that the more precious anything is, the more wicked men will be tempted to counterfeit it?
 - (a) Why counterfeit \$1 bills, when higher denominations are much more profitable?
 - (b) Why imitate quartz, when diamonds are far more valuable?
 - (ii) Of course, the more precious something is, the more difficult it is to counterfeit it.
 - (a) But this doesn't stop those who are greedy; and it certainly doesn't stop the devil. Satan wants to deceive you.
 - (b) The sin in your heart also wants to deceive you – it's sad to realize, but the sin in our souls wants to kill us.
 - (c) And so these two will do their best to produce something that looks like those Christian virtues which are most precious – love and humility – in order to destroy you.
 - (iii) However, Scripture warns you that you may have a kind of religious love, and yet have nothing of saving grace.
 - (a) Jesus spoke of what will happen to some during the very difficult times that would come in AD 70, "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12).
 - (b) He didn't apply this simply to unbelievers, but also to those who thought themselves to be believers. He continued, "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (v. 13).
 - (c) There were those who seemed to love Christ, who followed Him for some time, even gave up a great deal of their comforts to do this, but who in the end lost that love and called out for His death.
 - (d) Our passage reminds us that there were those who received the Word with joy – who probably thought they loved the Lord and that the Lord loved them and had saved them – who continued for a while, and then fell away.
 - (e) You can't base your assurance on the fact that you have some kind of love for the Father or the Son.
 - (f) As a Christian, you will love them, but not all love is gracious love.
 - (g) We'll continue to develop this theme as we move through to the next section.
 - (h) But for now, let's allow the Lord again to search our hearts in light of these two things. Amen.