

“Not All Affections Are Gracious, Part 4”
(Isaiah 58)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Edwards has been teaching us two main things:
 - a. True religion, the relationship that saves, is a matter of the heart, of the affections.
 - (i) We're not saved simply by believing correct doctrine, although we can't be saved without it.
 - (ii) We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.
 - b. But second, our affections can also deceive us.
 - (i) For every true and gracious affection, there is a counterfeit affection.
 - (ii) Just as Satan can counterfeit the fountain of all the affections – love – so he can counterfeit everything that flows from love.
2. Last week, we saw one more of these counterfeits of the enemy.
 - a. Usually, before the Lord saves us, He first makes us concerned about the state of our souls.
 - (i) Some deny this and say that the Lord generally brings us to Himself purely by His love and mercy.
 - (ii) But you don't really understand His love and mercy – you don't see your need of it – until you understand your spiritual state and the danger you're in because of it.
 - (iii) The Lord usually makes you aware of your danger before He delivers you, so that you will realize what He has done for you.
 - (iv) That's why when He wanted to prepare the way for His Son's coming, He sent John the Baptist to preach a message of repentance, so the Jews would flee from the coming wrath into the open arms of the Savior (Matt. 3:7).
 - (v) You must hear the Law and feel its condemnation before you will ever come to Christ to set you free.
 - (vi) This is also why if you ever want to lead someone to Christ, you must first help them understand their need of Him through the Law.
 - (vii) No one has ever come savingly to Christ who hasn't first seen the danger they were in.
 - b. But Edwards pointed out, on the other hand, just because you have experienced some concern for your soul – something of the terror of God's judgment, some degree of conviction – and then experienced some relief from the Gospel – some sense of His love or joy in believing He has forgiven you – doesn't mean that He has.

- (i) If the devil can counterfeit all the saving graces of the Spirit, he can also counterfeit those the Spirit uses to prepare you for grace – he can bring false convictions and fear – and those the Spirit brings once He has saved you – comfort and joy.
- (ii) Also, if he can counterfeit these graces, he can also counterfeit their order. (The one thing he can't counterfeit is the nature of the Spirit's work – yes, counterfeits can be distinguished from the genuine work of the Spirit).
- (iii) This is one of the reasons Scripture never points to this as the evidence that you're saved. Experience has shown us many times that those who have gone forward at evangelistic meetings to pray "the prayer" – those who have experienced concern from the message and felt relief at the altar – have still departed from Christ and returned to their former way of life.
- (iv) You must be concerned for your soul before you will come to Christ for His comfort, but just because you've become concerned about your soul and have experienced some degree of comfort from the Gospel doesn't mean you're genuinely saved.

B. Preview.

- 1. This evening, we're going to consider those evidences we typically associate with being a Christian: reading the Bible, praying, singing, attending worship and listening to sermons, as well as praising and glorifying God.
 - a. What if you do these things? What if you do them a lot? What does this say about you?
 - b. Does this mean you're a true believer? Not necessarily.
- 2. Let's consider this for a few moments.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, just because you put a great deal of effort doing the things typically associated with being a Christian doesn't mean you're a Christian.
 - 1. You realize, of course, that if you are a true believer, you will make the effort to read your Bible, pray, sing, go to worship and listen to sermons.
 - a. This is what grace produces in your hearts: it will make you want to do the things that will help you draw near to God.
 - b. This is the universal testimony of the saints. Consider:
 - (i) Anna the prophetess spent most of her in the temple, serving the Lord. Luke writes, "She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers" (Luke 2:36-37).
 - (ii) The early believers in Jerusalem were meeting in the temple on a daily basis, breaking bread from house to house with a glad heart, praising God (Acts 2:46-47).
 - (iii) Daniel regularly prayed three times a day, according to David's example in Psalm 55:16-18: "As for me, I shall call upon God, and the LORD will

save me. Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, and He will hear my voice. He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle *which is* against me, for they are many *who strive* with me.”

- (iv) Grace in the heart makes you want to sing praises to the Lord, according to Psalms 135 and 147, “Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD; praise *Him*, O servants of the LORD, you who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God! Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing praises to His name, for it is lovely” (Psalm 135:1-3); “Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant *and* praise is becoming” (147:1).
- (v) Grace makes you want to hear God’s Word – especially His Law – because it is what you delight in:
 - (a) “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2).
 - (b) “O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (119:97).
 - (c) “Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. . . . I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Your statutes” (vv. 35, 47, 48).
- (vi) Grace will make you love those who bring you the Word, “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, *and* says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7).
- (vii) It will make you love public worship:
 - (a) David writes, “I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. I shall wash my hands in innocence, and I will go about Your altar, O LORD, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and declare all Your wonders. O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells” (Ps. 26:5-8).
 - (b) And, “One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple” (27:4).
 - (c) The psalmist writes, “How lovely are Your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. The bird also has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You. . . . For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand *outside*. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness” (84:1-4, 10).

- c. This is what grace does; this is what the Spirit of God works in your hearts.
- 2. But on the other hand, just because you do these things doesn't mean the Spirit is the One who is moving you to do them.
 - a. Counterfeit love can also bring a counterfeit worship.
 - b. There are many examples in Scripture of those who spent a great deal of time in worship who were unconverted.
 - (i) The Israelites attended new moons, observed Sabbaths, called assemblies, spread out their hands to heaven, and prayed many prayers, but God didn't accept them: "When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies -- I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing *them*. So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen" (Isa. 1:12-15).
 - (ii) The Pharisees made long prayers and fasted twice a week (Luke 18:11-12).
 - (iii) Our text reminded us of those Jews who sought the Lord daily, who said they delighted to know God's ways, who fasted often (Isa. 58:2-4).
 - (iv) Many would come and listen to Ezekiel declare the Word of the Lord, but they would not do what he said: "They come to you as people come, and sit before you *as* My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires *expressed* by their mouth, *and* their heart goes after their gain. Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them" (Ez. 33:31-32).
 - (v) King Herod listened to John the Baptist gladly (Mark 6:20), so did many others who rejoiced in his light for a season (John 5:35).
 - (vi) Even the stony ground hearers received the Word with joy (Matt. 13:20).
 - c. Experience shows us that those involved in false religions are often far more devoted to their acts of worship than genuine believers.
 - (i) Many gave up their possessions and the world to become monks and nuns and live in monasteries and convents and bind themselves under the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.
 - (ii) Jehovah's witnesses often show much more zeal for their religion than most Christians, going door to door proselytizing for their "faith."
 - (iii) Muslims pray five times a day towards Mecca, every day: at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night.
 - d. If you are a true believer, you will pray, sing, read the Bible, listen to sermons, and go to worship often. But just because you do these things, it doesn't mean you're a Christian.

- B. Consider one more mark that is very much like the last: just because you spend a great deal of time praising and glorifying God publicly doesn't mean you're a genuine Christian.
1. Yes, if you're a Christian, you will do this.
 - a. How can you keep from praising God for all the love and mercy He has shown you and continues to show you in Christ – God loved you with an everlasting love, He sent His dearly beloved Son for you, He allowed Him to go through the worst sufferings imaginable, and He did this to save you from hell and bring you to Himself forever in heaven.
 - b. How could you not do all in your power to glorify and praise Him?
 2. But consider all those who gave praise and glory to God who weren't converted.
 - a. The Israelites God delivered from Egypt sang His praises at the Red Sea, but they soon forgot His works (Ex. 15).
 - b. When Jesus healed the paralytic, there were many who praised God. After Jesus issued the command, "He got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this'" (Mark 2:12; cf. Matt. 9:8; Luke 5:26).
 - c. When Jesus made the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, the blind to see, the Jews glorified the God of Israel (Matt. 15:31).
 - d. When He raised the dead son of the widow of Nain, "Fear gripped them all, and they *began* glorifying God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and, 'God has visited His people!'" (Luke 7:16).
 - e. When He taught in their synagogues, they all glorified Him (Luke 4:15).
 - f. When He entered Jerusalem, they all cried out with loud voices, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. 21:9).
 - g. Shortly after these things, these same people publicly cried out for His death.
 - h. How many do you know who have professed Christ as their Savior and Lord publicly, and have told others about him, only later to turn away entirely from Him?
 - i. These things should stand as a warning to you not to rest in the fact that you have publicly professed Christ or glorified Him.
 - j. Make sure that you do these things, but make sure that when you do, you are motivated by genuine love for the Father and for His Son He sent to save you. Amen.