

“Christ’s Example of Holy Affection”
(John 17)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last Lord’s Day evening, we considered the spiritual affections of both David and Paul.
 - a. As we surveyed the Psalms, we found several things in the life of David:
 - (i) The intensity of his seeking after God.
 - (ii) His earnest and heartfelt praise of the Lord.
 - (iii) The depth of his worship.
 - (iv) His strong confidence in the Lord.
 - (v) His grief over the Lord’s withdrawing from him.
 - (vi) His love for the Law of God.
 - (vii) His desire to be in God’s presence and to have communion with Him.
 - (viii) His thankfulness for answered prayer.
 - (ix) And his hatred of sin and of the Lord’s enemies for His sake.
 - (x) David was a man of deep and strong affection.
 - b. We saw the same was true of Paul.
 - (i) In his willingness to leave all his so-called “achievements” behind to gain Christ.
 - (ii) In his submission to Christ in whatever He asked him to do.
 - (iii) In his love for Christ’s people that they be established in the truth.
 - (iv) In his setting aside his own comforts to minister to the needs of the saints.
 - (v) In his tender care for the saints, as a nursing mother towards her infant.
 - (vi) And in his love and concern for his fellow Jews, and his willingness to be accursed for them that they might receive the promises in Christ.
 - (vii) From this, Edwards concluded: “If anyone can consider these accounts given in the Scripture of this great apostle, and which he gives of himself, and yet not see that his religion consisted much in *affection*, must have a strange faculty of managing his eyes to shut out the light which shines most full in his face.”
2. David and Paul remind us that affection is a very large part of true religion.

B. Preview.

1. Now if this is true of these two saints, how much more true is it of the One who is the paradigm or archetype after which these two men are recreated – the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. God sent Christ to be the light of the world, the head of His church and the perfect example of true religion and virtue.

- b. He is the One we are to imitate, the Shepherd we as the flock are to follow wherever He goes.
 - c. What was He like? He had a remarkably tender and loving heart. His was the greatest example of love, both toward God and man that has ever been or ever will be.
2. What we'll see this evening is that Christ is full of affection:
- a. In His zeal for the Father's glory.
 - b. In His pity and compassion.
 - c. In His grief over sin.
 - d. In His lamenting and weeping over the sins and coming judgment of His erring people.
 - e. In His desire to eat the Passover with His disciples and in His love and care for them before His suffering.
 - f. And in His willing to undergo God's wrath for all of His people.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, He was full of zeal for His Father's glory.
1. We read in John's Gospel: "The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated *at their tables*. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, 'Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business.' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house will consume Me'" (John 2:13-17).
 2. In doing this, He fulfilled what was written in Psalm 69, "May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; may those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel, because for Your sake I have borne reproach; dishonor has covered my face. I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me" (vv. 6-9).
 3. Notice here the reproach and dishonor He was willing to bear because He chose to be zealous for His Father's honor.
 4. This is the same thing that will happen to us if we should choose to live the life of a zealous Christian.
- B. Second, He was full of pity and compassion.
1. We see this in His care for those He ministered to: "Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them *those who were* lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the

blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, 'I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way'" (Matt. 15:29-32).

2. We see this in His concern for a widow: "Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, 'Do not weep.' And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise!' The dead man sat up and began to speak. And *Jesus* gave him back to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).
3. In His command to His disciples to pray for His people's distress: "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest'" (Matt. 9:35-38).
4. In His ministering to the physical needs of His people: "Now when Jesus heard *about John*, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard *of this*, they followed Him on foot from the cities. When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick" Matt. 14:13-14).
5. We see the depth of His love in how He responded to Mary and Martha's mourning over their brother.
 - a. Their tears drew tears from His eyes, even though He knew their brother would soon be raised from the dead.
 - b. "So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning *their* brother. Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. Martha then said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world.' When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she

got up quickly and was coming to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’ When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, ‘See how He loved him!’” (John 11:17-36).

c. His heart was moved by the suffering and grief of others.

C. Third, He was angered and grieved over the sins of men.

1. “He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. They were watching Him *to see* if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. He said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Get up and come forward!’ And He said to them, ‘Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?’ But they kept silent. After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, *as to* how they might destroy Him” (Mark 3:1-6).
2. Love for the Lord will draw out anger towards its opposite.

D. Fourth, He lamented over the sins and coming judgment of His erring people.

1. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!* Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”” (Luke 13:34-35).
2. He wept over Jerusalem when He considered what would happen to them because of their rejection of Him. “When He approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:41-44).

E. Fifth, He desired to eat the Passover with His disciples and expressed love and care for them before His suffering.

1. Before He suffered, we read of His great desire to spend the last Passover with His disciples: “When the hour had come, He reclined *at the table*, and the

apostles with Him. And He said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God’ (Luke 22:14-16).

2. We see His love and care for them in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-16), something that took place on the night before His sufferings and crucifixion:
 - a. We see His love for them:
 - (i) “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1).
 - (ii) “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you” (15:9-14).
 - b. He told them He was going away, but that He would prepare a place for them: “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also” (14: 1-3).
 - c. He told them about the difficulties and suffering they would face:
 - (i) “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also” (15:18-20).
 - (ii) “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them” (John 16:1-4).
 - (iii) “Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one *will* take your joy away from you” (16:20-22).

- (iv) “Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and *yet* I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (16:32-33).
- d. He told them of the Comforter who would take His place and of the peace and joy He would bring:
- (i) “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (14:16).
- (ii) “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (vv. 25-27).
- e. This was like His last will and testament.
- f. And all of this was concluded by His high priestly prayer in which He pours out His most heartfelt prayer for their wellbeing (John 17).
- F. Finally, that which most clearly shows us the strength of His love was when He underwent His Father’s wrath for His Father’s glory and for our salvation.
1. It was the strength of His affection that gave Him the victory in the garden when he prayed more earnestly, offering His prayers with strong crying and tears, when He sweat great drops of blood (Luke 22:44).
 2. His love for His Father and for us was stronger than His natural affections of fear and self preservation that would easily have overcome us if we were faced with God’s wrath for sin.
 3. How can we see these examples in the life of our Lord and not see that true religion is first of all a matter of the heart.
 - a. We have been predestined to be conformed to His image – His moral image.
 - b. In the new birth, we have the heart of stone which is ours by nature taken away and it’s replaced with a heart of flesh – this is what that heart is like, like Christ’s.
 - c. Knowing Christ in a saving way changes us, it makes us more like Him.
 - d. Let’s allow the Lord now to examine our hearts to show us whether those affections are there. Amen.