

Christ's Heart Towards His People Part 4

Samuel Bolton, D.D. (1606-1654)

Song of Songs 4:9

I. The Text Opened

A. Song of Songs 4:9, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes; with one chain about thy neck."

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: Whatever Christians enjoy, they enjoy from God's love to them.

1. All your needs, as well as all your enjoyments are mercy, are love.
 - a) Whatever your condition is, it proceeds:
 - (1) *From God who is the best of beings.*
 - (2) *From the best of God; his heart and good will.*
 - (3) *It is the best for you.*
 - (4) *God's people have a blessing hid in the worst things.*
 - (5) *You have a blessing in poverty, a blessing in sickness, a blessing in crosses, a blessing in death itself.*
 - b) Riches are not in the promise, but mercy is in the promise.
 - (1) *Though poverty, yet mercy; though afflictions, yet mercy; and you can all tell me, a cross in mercy, is better than a comfort in wrath.*
 - (2) *Though prosperity is more cordial, yet afflictions are more physical.*
 - (3) *A sanctified cross is better than an unsanctified comfort, etc.*
2. If the heart of Christ is taken with his church and people:
 - a) Then see what a fearful thing sin is, which causes God oftentimes to deal harshly with that, which his soul loves so dearly.
 - b) God oftentimes afflicts and punishes his church sharply and severely.
 - c) Which yet his heart is much taken with, and sin is the cause.
 - d) And therefore, what a fearful thing is sin!
 - e) How grievous would it be to you, to be forced to take hard courses with a child your heart is taken with?
 - (1) *Though it is to do him good.*
 - f) Why, God is taken with his church, and do you not think it moves God to afflict and chastise it?
 - g) We would gladly do all the good we can to the people we love.
 - h) Why, so it is with God to his church.
 - (1) *He loves his church, and willingly would he do anything for it.*
 - (2) *And it is the grief of his soul, that he must take contrary courses with us, to do us good.*
 - (3) *That he must be forced to afflict and chastise them he loves so dearly.*
 - (4) *To bring them to life by death, to good by evil, to a crown by crosses.*
 - i) When Judah justified the sin of her sister Israel, exceeding her in idols, what trouble was it to God to cast her off!
 - (1) *How willing was he to receive her after all her adulteries?*

(2) *Jer. 3:1, "Thou hast plaid the harlot," etc., and when she would go on in her adulteries: yet how unwilling still was he to give her up?*

(3) *Until at last it grew so high, that there was no remedy, (2 Chron. 36:16).*

(a) *He must necessarily do it.*

j) And when he had done it, how exceedingly was God's heart moved, that he must be forced to deal so hardly with them he loved so dearly?

(1) *Read Jer. 12:7-9, etc., see how God laments over the loss of that which their sins would not give him leave to keep.*

(a) *"I have forsaken mine house! I have left mine heritage! I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies!"*

(b) *And what was it that forced God to deal so hardly with them he loved so dearly?*

(c) *Why it was sin, (2 Chron. 36:15-16).*

(d) *He sent messengers, because he had compassion on them.*

(e) *They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets; until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until there was no remedy.*

(f) *And which of these has remained to be done among us?*

(2) *Did we not justly fear, by reason of that idolatry, superstition, profanation of sabbaths, persecution of the saints, and messengers of God, that our day was gone; our night approaching?*

(a) *That God should have opened the sluices of his wrath, and let in a sea of his displeasure on us?*

(3) *And how can we better answer God's dealings towards us, than to abandon that, cast out that which was our fear, and gave God just occasion to destroy us?*

(a) *Let us now do by our sins as the Israelites did by their leaven.*

(b) *Search your houses, search the land, search your hearts.*

(c) *Otherwise our preservations from former, will be but reservations to future, and worsen evils.*

(i) Sin will cause God to punish those he loves.

3. If the heart of Christ is so much taken with his church, then let this show you, into what way you resolve to your heart all the passages of God's love to his church and people, even into his own love.

a) His grace is the rise, and his glory is the end.

b) There are two main streams, in which the goodness of God runs to his church. 1. The higher, and 2. The lower.

(1) *But both of these streams have the same head, the same spring from where they come, even his own love.*

(2) *1. For the higher, or upper streams, and these are four.*

(a) *1. Election.*

(b) *2. Justification.*

(c) *3. Sanctification.*

(d) *4. Glorification.*

(i) And all these arise from the great abyss, and sea of his mercy toward his church.

c) His heart is taken with us; and therefore, 1. He chose us, Deut. 7:7-8, "The Lord loved you not, nor chose you, because ye were more in number than any people. But because the Lord loved you."

(1) *So, God did not set his heart on us, because we were better than others; for there are others in the world who might have been made more lovely.*

- d) His heart is taken with us; therefore, 2. He justifies us.
- (1) *We could do nothing to strike off any former score.*
 - (2) *For all we did, set us further in debt: it was but an adding of sin to sin, guilt to guilt.*
 - (3) *The sin of our righteousness, to the sin of our unrighteousness, covering a blot with a blot, as Isa. 30:1.*
 - (4) *No, it did arise from this.*
 - (a) *His heart was taken with us, therefore did he justify us. Titus 3:7, "We are justified freely by his grace."*
 - (b) *The same is found in Romans 3:24, 4:5, which show, that into this, all the expressions of his love are resolved.*
- e) His heart is taken with us; therefore, 3. He did sanctify us.
- (1) *Our holiness is not fashioned out of our own principles; spun out of our own bowels; compassed by our own strength and industry, but freely imparted and given of God.*
 - (2) *As our righteousness is freely imputed, so our holiness is freely imparted.*
 - (a) *That you are not a killing Cain, a self-murdering Saul, a despairing Judas, a profane Esau, a drunken Baltazar, a filthy sodomite, it arises from this, mere mercy.*
 - (3) *But that God has not only restrained you, but renewed you; not only chained up your spirit, but changed your spirit; this is free-mercy.*
 - (4) *And so, the scripture tells us, 1 Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of his abundant mercy has begotten us again — not only mercy, but abundance of mercy.*
 - (5) *So, James 1:18, "...of his own free-will begot he us."*
 - (6) *And that in John 1:13, "We were born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."*
 - (a) *Not of blood, nor great men, nor good men can do it.*
 - (b) *Regeneration does not come by generation.*
 - (c) *It comes from the will of God, it is a mercy we give least concurrence to, of all other.*
 - (d) *When we have grace, then we are helpers for the growth, and increase of grace.*
 - (i) ***But who shall give grace?***
 - (7) *When the candle is lit, it will burn; but none but God can light up the candle.*
 - (a) *After sanctification we concur.*
 - (b) *There is no concurrence in regeneration.*
 - (c) *This is the freest mercy of all other.*
 - (d) *There is nothing to move him to bestow grace.*
 - (i) ***Here is the ground, his heart is taken; therefore, he sanctifies us.***
- f) His heart is taken with us; therefore, 4. He glorifies us.
- (1) *As our justification, so our sanctification, and glorification arise from the same ground.*
 - (2) *His heart is taken with us, and therefore, he glorifies us.*
 - (a) *And so, the scripture speaks plainly, Eph. 2:5, "By grace ye are saved."*
 - (b) *And lest he should never make it firm enough, he adds, in the 8th and 9th verses, by grace ye are saved ... not of works.*
 - (3) *So that you see into what to resolve the higher streams of his love.*
 - (a) *His choosing us, his justifying, his sanctifying, and his glorifying us.*
 - (b) *His heart is taken with us — therefore, he chose us; therefore, he justifies us, etc.*

4. As you may see into what to resolve all the higher.
- a) So, the lower streams of his love to his church.
 - b) All into this: his heart is taken with his church.
 - c) His heart is taken with us; therefore, he protects us.
 - d) His heart is taken with us; therefore, he will preserve us.
 - e) His heart is taken with us; therefore, he will support us.
 - f) His heart is taken with us; therefore, he will deliver us.
 - g) All the good we have in hand, and all the good we have in hope.
 - (1) *All the mercies bestowed, and all those which God is bestowing on us.*
 - (2) *Look upon all as a continued thread spun out of the bowels of free-grace, and mercy.*
 - (3) *God has done great things for us; and from this they have arisen.*
 - (4) *His heart is taken with us, his love towards us, Jer. 31:3-4, "I loved thee with an everlasting love; — therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."*
 - (5) *If God had looked on us, and taken either ground or motive from anything in us, to do this for us, we should never have enjoyed it.*
 - (a) *There was no ground, no foundation of desert in us, (we abhorred its thoughts), for God to raise such a fabric of mercy on, as he has done.*
 - (b) *God's own heart is the foundation; his own mercy and good will towards us, which is so strong, so firm, so full a foundation.*
 - (c) *Therefore, it is, that we may expect a structure of mercy suitable to the foundation.*
 - (6) *And, as this is the foundation of all those great and stupendous things, which God has done for us.*
 - (7) *So, it is a ground for us to expect, that God will yet do greater things for us, than ever he has done.*
 - (8) *Indeed, when we look on ourselves, we are at an end in our thoughts, and think God is at an end in his mercy.*
 - (9) *But when we look up toward God, and see there the ground of what we have, this keeps up our hearts from sinking, and causes us to look on all we have, as an earnest of more.*
 - (10) *God has raised us up to some height of mercy; and if we look downwards, if we look on ourselves, we are driven past the utmost of our thoughts.*
 - (11) *But let us look up to heaven, where this mercy we have, has its spring and foundation, and we shall quickly recover.*
 - (12) *Though there is nothing in us, yet there is something in God; and that which is in God is the ground of this mercy, and therefore will he go on in the ways of his own mercy.*
 - h) I have often thought within myself; how far God at this time has out-done his people in mercy.
 - (1) *He has not only out-done the deservings of his people, but out-done the desires of his people, the prayers of his people.*
 - (2) *I am often ready to think God is at an end of his mercy.*
 - (3) *But, when I recover myself, and look on the ground of God's doing good to his church and people.*
 - (4) *Not to be any goodness in the church.*
 - (5) *But merely his own goodness, this revives me again; he puts a heart into me (and understanding) that God will yet do greater things for his church, than yet he has done.*

i) God is oftentimes weary in going on in a way of judgement, because the exercise of his judgements are drawn out by us, by our sins.

(1) *He is said not to afflict willingly. And his judgements he calls his strange work.*

(2) *It is not so natural to God, and therefore he is quickly weary of it.*

(3) *But God is never weary of the exercise of his mercy; and therefore, he goes on to add mercy to mercy.*

(a) *We say, the bee gives honey naturally; the sting only, when she is forced to it.*

(b) *So, God, it is natural to him to show mercy, but he is provoked to exercise judgement.*

(c) *Here he is called the Father of mercies, begets mercy.*

(d) *Mercy is the issue of God, most natural to God; and being so, here mercy pleases him.*

(i) *Actions of nature are actions of delight.*

(ii) *God is never so well pleased with any carriage towards his church, as those which are in the ways of mercy.*

(4) *No, if he afflicts his church, it is to show mercy.*

(a) *Mercy is the end of all his dealings towards his church; and therefore, mercy being so natural, so pleasing; and that the mercy of God is the ground of his expressions of love to us, as it is.*

(b) *Though our sins may draw out the expressions of his justice; yet his mercy arises from himself.*

(c) *Here we may have a ground to expect yet greater things than ever.*

5. If the heart of Christ is so much taken with his church, then what will become of those, who are enemies to his church and people!

a) Is the heart of Christ so much taken with his church and people, then woe be to them that offend his church!

b) If you touch them, you touch the apple of his eye.

c) God's people are dear to God.

(1) *They are his spouse, his children, his members, purchased with the price of his blood; his inheritance, his portion, all his comings-in.*

(2) *Those he died for, shed his blood for, one drop of this is worth a thousand worlds.*

(3) *And therefore, those whom he was content to shed his blood for, certainly he more esteems than all the world besides.*

d) We say, while the iron is in its own nature, you may handle it, and meddle with it; but if once the nature of fire is added to it, if you touch it, it will burn you.

(1) *So while the children of God, are but the children of men, you may deal with them as with other men; but if once the nature of God is stamped on them, the image of Christ is drawn on them, it will be dangerous for you to meddle with them, lest fire break out of their mouth to devour you.*

(2) *We read in Zech. 12:3, God said, he would make his church "a burdensome stone," etc.*

(3) *Whoever lifts it, shall crush himself; whoever seeks to hurt it, shall ruin himself.*

(4) *You see it in Pharaoh, Haman, and Ahithophel.*

(a) *Haman lifted so long at this stone, that it fell on him at last, and crushed him.*

(b) *Pharaoh followed the children of Israel so long, that he could not return at last, but was overwhelmed in the waters.*

(c) *He that shoots in a weapon that is over-charged, strikes down himself, and does not hit that which he aimed at.*

(d) *He who intends evil against the church, shoots in a piece over-charged, and is sure to be struck down with his own recoil.*

e) We see it in our days.

(1) *They who have dug pits for us, have fallen into them themselves.*

(2) *They who laid snares for us, in them is their own foot taken.*

(3) *They have but made rods for their own backs; paved a way to their own destruction; dug graves to bury themselves, in seeking our ruin.*

f) The scepter of Christ has been too strong for the principality of Satan, he has a rod of iron; a scepter of power, an arm of strength, to crush in pieces all his enemies.

(1) *And therefore, as Pilate's wife said of Christ, "have nothing to do with that just man."*

(2) *So, I say to you, do you see a godly man?*

(a) *Beware of having anything to do with him, by way of offence.*

(3) *For their angels always behold the face of their heavenly Father.*

III. The Text Applied

A. If the heart of Christ is so much taken with you, his church, then see here the ground of acceptance of your services.

1. God being taken with the people, is taken with the performances of his people.

2. He had respect to Abel, and then to his offering.

a) Christ, his heart, was taken with the person, and then with his performance.

3. Here Christ says to his church, Song of Songs 2:14, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice. For thy countenance is comely, and thy voice is sweet."

a) Indeed, if acceptance should arise from the worthiness of our duties, we should never look to be accepted.

b) There is so much sin in our services, so much evil in our good, so much coldness in our best works, so much formality in our chiefest power, so much deadness in our best life, so much of the world, so much of our earth in our employments for heaven.

c) And if acceptance should arise from any worth in them, we should be sure to miss it.

d) But arising from his good will and mercy to us, his heart being first taken with us, is then taken with our performances.

e) Here is the assurance of being accepted.

4. No, and not only of our purest and most perfect services; but even of our poor and imperfect duties, such as we throw away for dead, and cast prayers, Song 5:1, "He drinks the milk as well as the wine."

a) We look upon a prayer accompanied with deadness, distraction, as a cast prayer.

b) O! we say, how can God accept of such impure, imperfect services!

c) But here it does not arise from the excellency of your prayers, but from the indulgency of his grace.

(1) *It is the voice of his spouse, though never so weak.*

(2) *It is the cry of a member of his, though never so faint.*

(3) *And he can put his odors, his incense to them, though never so impure, and make them acceptable, (Rev. 8:4).*