

Christ's Heart Towards His People Part 5

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: Men Must Gain and Interest in this Love that Christ has for His Church

1. Do we have an interest in this love?
 - a) So, you might say or think this, "You tell us of the exceeding love of Christ to his church. But what if I am not of his church? What if I have no interest in his love? What is all this to me?"
 - b) It concerns your everlasting good to have an interest, and your present comfort to know you have an interest, and in this inquiry I would have you:
2. 1. To examine your hearts thoroughly.
 - a) Deceits lie low, for a false evidence is the fruit of a slight and superficial search.
3. 2. In your inquiry do not let anything which has no interest in this love, be a foundation on which your soul rests.
 - a) Look at the evidence that you have or do show a love to Christ.
 - (1) *Acquaint yourself with the most clearing and proving evidences.*
4. 3. Take your evidences from the carriage of the Spirit, neither at the best, nor at the worst, but the middle way, which is mostly who you are.
 - a) If you look on yourself at the worst, you may be discouraged.
 - b) If at the best, you may be deceived.
 - c) Many have had such affections in a heat or fervor of spirit, which being cold have nothing of them.
5. 4. Do not judge yourself by particular actions and carriages.
 - a) But look on the universal frame and bent of your spirit.
 - b) No certain rule is to be established on a particular instance, whether good or bad.
 - (1) *I might lay down other rules to observe in your inquiry, but we will come to the inquiry itself.*
6. Would you know whether you are one with whom Christ's heart is taken?
 - a) See whether you are of his church.
 - b) Are you one, who are taken out of the world?
 - c) Are you one, whom God has called?
 - d) One whom he has justified?
 - e) One whom he has regenerated? Sanctified?
 - f) Are you one, who are washed, purged, renewed?
 - g) These might be general ideas, and may be considered too obscure.

(1) But I will name one, and it is a plain one, and there is nothing more demonstrative than this.

7. Would you know whether the heart of Christ is taken with you, then see if you are one whose heart is taken with Christ?

- a) If Christ is taken with you, you are taken with Christ.
- b) It is a mutual, a reciprocal taking.
- c) Whatever God does to the soul, it makes an impression in the soul of the same to God.
- d) God delights in us, and on this we come to delight in him.
- e) God knows us, and on this we know him, (John 10:14).
- f) God apprehends us, and on this we apprehend him.
- g) He chooses us, and on this we choose him.
- h) He loves us, and on this we love him, (1 John 4:19).
- i) His heart is taken with us, and on this our hearts come to be taken with him.
 - (1) Our love to him is nothing else but a beam of God's love reflected back on God.*
 - (2) So that this now is a true character of Christ's heart being taken with you, if your heart is taken with Christ.*

8. Question: But you will ask, how shall I know whether my heart is taken with Christ?

a) Answer. For the answer of this, because on this foundation I will lay the whole weight of this discourse, in this use, 1. A heart taken with Christ, is a heart which knows Christ, and has tasted of Christ.

- (1) Are you such as know Christ?*
- (2) For knowledge of Christ precedes the love of Christ.*
- (3) He who does not know, cannot love.*
- (4) Things unseen may be loved, but things unknown cannot be loved. 1 Peter 1:8, "Whom having not seen ye love," but never not known.*

b) All love to Christ arises from discoveries and manifestations of Christ to the soul.

(1) Either from the discoveries of those beauties, those attractive excellencies that are in him, or with that, from the discovery of his heart and good will towards us.

c) Blind men cannot discern beauties; nor ignorant men of the beauties of Christ.

- (1) Christ is to them as a mine of gold covered over with earth and rubbish.*
 - (a) When you behold him, you see no beauty in him, that shall make him desired.*

d) Now then, are you one who knows Christ?

- (1) Did God ever reveal him to you in a promise?*
- (2) What visions has Christ made to your soul?*
- (3) What manifestations?*
- (4) What discoveries that may evidence to you, that you know him?*

9. There are four manifestations, or discoveries of Christ to the soul, which exceedingly take the soul.

a) Indeed, every vision of Christ takes the heart.

b) But at these times the heart is not only wooed and won, but overcome with his sweetness and glory.

(1) 1. After the soul has been in sorrow, been overwhelmed in the deeps of legal humiliation, and have been broken and shattered in pieces with consternation, and apprehensions of sin, and God's wrath for it, then a discovery of Christ, and vision of Christ to the soul, is a resurrection from the dead.

(a) *When Christ comes by a promise into the soul, and displays his glory, the riches, and greatness, and freeness of his grace, as to Moses, “the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin,” (Exod. 34:6).*

(b) *“I, I am he who forgiveth thy iniquities,” etc. (Isa. 43:25).*

(c) *Then is the soul beyond expression, enamored with him; now it is overcome with his beauties and excellencies, and even ravished with his love.*

(d) *And this is the first eminent taking of the heart with Christ.*

(2) 2. *When the soul has been on the stormy sea of temptations and desertions; has long labored under the sense of God’s withdrawings and absence from the soul, and Christ returns again, breaking the dark and thick cloud, and shining into the soul.*

(a) *Who can then express the warmth, the comfort, the revivings, the holy heats and flames of love and affection to Christ?*

(b) *You see how it was with Job. “I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear. But now mine eyes see thee.”*

(c) *And certainly, the sight of God’s beauties took him.*

(d) *Those eyes which saw him were like a burning-glass to the heart, to kindle the flames and fervors of holy affections towards him again.*

(e) *You see how it was with the church in Song of Songs 3:4.*

(i) *Christ had withdrawn himself.*

(f) *She makes inquiry after him, but could not hear of him.*

(g) *At last after all her trouble, Christ appears to her soul.*

(h) *And you may read there, how exceedingly her heart was taken with his return.*

(i) *“I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother’s house.”*

(3) 3. *When the soul sits down to contemplate, and read over the beauties and loves of Christ, when it is in the contemplations of those surpassing excellencies, and admired sweetness which is in Christ, and Christ (while the soul is busy in feeding on these thoughts) makes a discovery of himself to the soul.*

(a) *Makes the soul to see a vision of his glory.*

(b) *O! How is the heart taken with him!*

(c) *It is even drowned and sunk in a sea of glory.*

(d) *Ah! What clasping, what embraces!*

(e) *What loves are there then between Christ and the soul!*

(i) *It is impossible for me to express this, or for me or you to conceive.*

(ii) *It is a vision of glory, the very porch of heaven.*

(4) 4. *When the soul is under outward pressures, afflictions, prison, sickness, on one’s death-bed, then a visit of Christ, a discovery of himself exceedingly ravishes and takes the heart.*

(a) *Here is kindness indeed, riches for the poor, liberty for a prisoner, a cordial for the sick; here is all in Christ’s manifestation.*

c) Well then, would you know whether your heart is taken with Christ?

(1) *Do you know Christ?*

(2) *Did you ever see the face of Christ in a promise?*

(3) *What manifestations has Christ made to you?*

(4) *What manifestations within you in the work of grace?*

(5) *What manifestations to you in the beginning of glory?*

(a) *You who do not know Christ, cannot love Christ.*

B. There are then Nine Signs of Love to Christ

1. Sign; a heart taken with Christ, is not excessively taken with anything else.
 - a) The sweetness of Christ overcomes all the sweetness in other things, in the creatures.
 - b) Did we see his beauties, all the world would be blackness.
 - c) Did we see his fulness, all the world were but emptiness.
 - d) I say, did we but know the excellencies and beauties of Christ, and the satisfying-sweetness of his love, nothing should have a room in our hearts, except he alone.
 - e) The higher we ascend toward heaven, the lesser will the things on earth appear.
 - f) The love of Christ has a raising-power, working our hearts as high as heaven, and being there, all things here below are of no account and esteem to the soul.
 - (1) *So, Paul says that very thing about a man on fire with the love of Christ. "Yea doubtless I count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ — and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ," (Phil. 3:8).*
 - (2) *Well then, they whose hearts are taken with the creature, taken with the world, taken with sin and vanity, these are too gross to be taken with spiritual loves.*
2. Sign. What the heart is taken with, the soul seems to live more in it, than in itself.
 - a) Do but examine it in anything the heart is taken with, whether your comforts, your delights, your happiness, whether it does not lie in them.
 - (1) *The worldling, he lives in his possessions.*
 - (2) *The voluptuous man in his pleasures.*
 - b) So here, if your heart is taken with Christ, then you live more in Christ, than you do in yourself. "I live, yet not I, but Christ," the apostle says (Gal. 2:20).
 - c) You cannot any more subsist without him, than the beam without the sun, or the spark without the fire.
 - d) I say, if your heart is taken with Christ, you live in Christ more than in yourself.
 - (1) *Your life, your comforts, your happiness, they are all folded up in him, as God says about his church... "All my fresh springs are in thee," (Psalm 87:7).*
 - (2) *"And, whom have I in heaven but thee! And in earth in comparison of thee!" (Psalm 73:25), says the enamored soul of God, his heart was taken with God, and he lived in God more than in himself.*
 - (a) *But the best of a Christian, those precious things in him, lies out of himself, and lies in Christ.*
3. Sign. What the heart is taken with, that the comforts of the life are upheld by from day to day.
 - a) Now would you know what your heart is taken with.
 - b) See what the comfort of your life is upheld by from day to day, is Jesus Christ the comfort of your life?
 - (1) *Is he the joy of your hearts?*
4. Sign. A heart taken with Christ that has high apprehensions and valuations of Christ.
 - a) It values and esteems him above all the comforts and contentments in heaven and earth.
 - (1) *Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven, but thee! And in the earth, in comparison of thee!"*
 - (2) *Here is the breathing of a soul taken with Christ.*

- b) He prizes Christ above all the comforts and contents in the world.
- (1) *In the act of prizing Christ, we do not mean a bare and naked estimate of Christ, in the understanding.*
- (a) *Many are they that will tell you, they conclude Christ to be worth a world, who yet will not part with anything for Christ.*
- (b) *You must have an apprehension as prevails with a man to do actions agreeable to the rate it pretends to set on Christ, as in the case of the wise merchant who did not barely judge that the pearl was worth all he had.*
- (i)** *But he did actions consonant and agreeable to it.*
- (c) *Seeing he could not enjoy the pearl without parting with all he had to compass it, he sells all to gain the pearl.*
- (i)** *A soul taken with Christ not only barely judges and esteems Christ worth everything, but will part with everything to gain the Christ.*
- (d) *Christ is prized in this.*
- (e) *Not only to the person of Christ, not only to the benefits of Christ, but all of Christ.*
- (f) *We are to take Christ in the extent of Christ: Christ in his whole latitude. Christ in his holiness, Christ in his laws, Christ in his government, Christ in his truth, the whole of Christ.*
- (i)** *He that does not prize Christ in his whole latitude and extent, does not prize Christ at all as he ought to do.*
- (g) *Many desire Christ as Savior, without ever acknowledging Christ as King.*
- (h) *The soul taken with Christ is taken with all of Christ, as he is lovely in all things.*
- (i) *So, the soul loves everything about him and prizes and esteems all of Christ.*
- (2) *Such a one will prize Christ above all comforts and contentments in heaven and earth.*
- (a) *This Christ commands, Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."*
- (b) *Matthew 10:37, "He that loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."*
- (c) *You see in Abraham, who left all; in Moses, who prized more of the reproach of Christ, than all the treasures in Egypt; in David, Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee! Or in earth, in comparison of thee!"*
- (d) *As the world would be nothing else but a prison to a godly man, were it not that he enjoys something of Christ here.*
- (i)** *But the heaven of a godly man, it lies in God, it lies in Christ.*
- (e) *In this way the soul that is taken with Christ, prizes Christ above all the comforts, contentments of heaven and earth.*
5. Sign. A heart taken with Christ, the thoughts are taken up with Christ.
- a) Such a man thinks about Christ, and he speaks Christ, he *lives* Christ.
- b) You know whatever a man's heart is taken with, it is never off his thoughts, never off his heart, he is never well but thinking and speaking of that which he loves.
- c) The thoughts are the character of what the heart is taken with.
- d) If your heart is taken with Christ, your thoughts are taken up with him.
- e) Christ is always on your thoughts; he lies next to your heart.
- (1) *When you go to bed he is with you, (Song of Songs 1:13).*

- (2) *And when you awake, he is with you, as David says in Psalm 139:18.*
- f) And as the thoughts are taken up with Christ, so also is the tongue taken up.
- (1) *He thinks, and he speaks Christ.*
 - (2) *When Christ is in the heart, the tongue will discourse and speak of him.*
 - (3) *Whatever is in the heart, and the heart is taken with, that a man's discourse is most taken up with.*
 - (4) *As Psalm 37:30, "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgement." And why? "Because the law of his God is in his heart," (verse 31).*
- g) We cannot have a more full subject to discourse on.
- (1) *Other subjects are empty subjects, quickly barren.*
 - (2) *Talk of what you will, you will be quickly at an end.*
 - (3) *But Christ is a full subject.*
 - (4) *Whatever you fall on, is fulness in Christ, an everlasting spring, which affords fresh supplies of matter, new and unconceivable discoveries arise afresh to be the matter of supply to all eternity.*
 - (5) *Christ is all-sweet; a rose without thorns.*
 - (6) *A rose, for sweetness, without prickles, for contentment.*
 - (7) *And nothing is like this but Christ.*
 - (8) *All the things of the world since the fall, have been roses beset with thorns.*
 - (9) *Though there are many sweets in the world, yet they are not completely-sweet; they are beset with thorns.*
 - (10) *Crosses with comforts, and afflictions with affections.*
 - (11) *Christ is all-sweet, and nothing but sweet.*
 - (12) *As he said of his spouse, "You are all-fair."*
 - (a) *Beauty without spot.*
 - (b) *Sweet without thorns.*
 - (c) *He is a garden full of flowers, full of sweets.*
 - (d) *You can speak and consider nothing like this, but in Christ you may lay your thoughts and rest on him, and go home satisfied.*
- h) You cannot have a more delightful subject.
- (1) *Christ is the delight of all both in heaven and earth.*
- i) You cannot have a more profitable subject.
- (1) *A subject which in conversing on, we are transformed into his glory, (2 Cor. 3:18), into the glory of him, who is the subject of the discourse.*
 - (2) *Have you not been kindled with heavenly fire?*
 - (3) *Have your hearts not burned in the discussions of him, as well as in conversing with him?*
 - (a) *Indeed, we cannot speak about him correctly, but in some measure we converse with him.*
 - (4) *Do you not find it profitable to quicken you? To raise you? To comfort you? To inflame you? To humble you? To melt you? To transform you?*
 - (5) *Does not a discourse of his love quicken you, when you are dead?*
 - (a) *Comfort you, when you are dejected?*
 - (b) *Raise you, when fallen?*
 - (c) *Humble you, when proud?*
 - (d) *Inflame you, when you are cold?*
 - (e) *Enlarge you, when straightened, and pent within yourselves?*
 - (6) *O! That such worthless subjects should so often take up our tongues and thoughts!*

(a) In this let your thoughts be taken up with him, let your discourses be more of him, show yourselves to love him, by thinking Christ, speaking Christ, living Christ more.

6. Sign. A heart taken with Christ, thirsts after communion with, and nearer conjunction to Christ.

a) You know whatever your hearts are taken with, you desire, and thirst after communion, and converses with.

b) So, it is here between Christ and the soul.

c) The soul taken with Christ longs to be with him, and thirsts after communion with him.

(1) 1. In grace here. 2. In glory hereafter.

(2) It was the words of John Bradford that he could never leave a duty, until he had found communion with Christ in the duty.

(a) He could not leave confession, until he had found his heart touched, broken, and humbled for sin; nor petition, until he had found his heart taken with the beauties of the things desired, and carried out after them.

(b) Nor could he leave thanksgiving, until he had found his spirit enlarged, and his soul quickened in the return of praises.

(3) In this way he, whose heart is taken with Christ, thirsts after communion with him, and no duty makes him content in which he has not found either his quickening, or his comforting presence.

(a) Either communion with his grace, or communion with his comfort.

d) As he thirsts after communion with him here in grace, so he desires communion with him in glory, to be with the Lord, as the apostle says.

(1) While the soul is here, it sees the distance too great between Christ and it, that she cannot enjoy that sweet communion with him.

(2) As the apostle says, "While we are present in the flesh, we are absent from the Lord." And therefore, the soul breaths after him, desires to be with him. The apostle says, "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ."

(3) The same is said of David. Psalm 42:1-2, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks; so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God!"

(a) He had tasted the sweetness of Christ, and did not fear the bitterness of death.

(b) He had life in patience; death in desire; because by death he should be carried to more sweet and intimate conjunction with Christ.

(4) It was the thought of Augustine, "Lord, I will die, that I may enjoy thee. I will not live, but I will die. I desire to die, that I may see Christ; and refuse to live, that I may live with Christ."

(5) And this disposition you see in the spouse here in the Song.

(a) Her heart being taken with Christ, she could not brook the distance between Christ and her; and therefore, cries out, Song of Songs 8:1 "Make haste, make haste my beloved."

(b) The more the soul believes, and the more the heart is taken with Christ, the greater are the desires to be with him.

(c) Until Simeon had gotten Christ into his arms, he was unwilling to die.

(d) But after he had Christ in his arms, "Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace; for my eyes have seen thy salvation."

7. Sign. A heart taken with Christ thinks nothing too much to do, nothing too much to suffer for Christ.

- a) We say, there is no difficulty in love.
- b) Things impossible to others, are easy to them who love.
- c) And things burdensome to others, are delightful to them who love.
- d) If once your heart is taken with Christ, you will think nothing too much to do, nothing too much to suffer for him.

(1) As Christ thought nothing too much for us, because his heart was taken with us; neither shall we think anything too much for Christ.

8. Sign. A heart taken with Christ is exceedingly cast down with the withdrawings and absence of Christ.

- a) The comforts of the soul are laid up in Christ.
- b) And when he is gone, all is gone.
- c) Comfort gone, joy gone, the heart gone with him.
- d) As Mephibosheth said, "take all, now my Lord is come back."

(1) So the soul says, take everything, take the world, take riches, take heaven, and glory, so far as heaven and you are concerned, this is important, that my Lord may return to my soul.

9. Sign. A heart taken with Christ is fully content and satisfied with the enjoyments and possession of Christ.

- a) The possession of the thing loved contents the soul so far as there is satisfaction and contentment with it.
- b) The reason why we do not meet with full contentment and satisfaction here in the possession of our loves, is because they lack fulness.
- c) But it is not so with Christ.

(1) He is able to brim the soul, to satisfy the spirit, to answer all the desires of the heart; and therefore, the heart taken with him, must necessarily rest satisfied and contented with him.

(2) Such a gulf of desire is in the soul of men, that if God should cast in a thousand worlds, there would be no contentment, except Christ is cast in too.

(3) And Christ is so full of contentment, that if God bestows him, they will neither need nor desire anything more.

III. The Text Applied

A. Trial and Examination

1. And in this way, we see this serves for our use of trial and examination.
2. Next, we will consider a use of exhortation, and conclude this.