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Class Notes

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Character, Part 1

HEART: Affection, Desire, Will

I. Section Overview: A Matter of the Heart

A. Potemkin's Village

B. True Christianity: A Matter of the Heart

1. *Man looks at the outward appearance; God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7)*

2. Sermon on the Mount: Jesus Christ probes the hearts of His disciples

a. Initial principle

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:8)

b. A consistent probing of the HEART

Jesus probes the HEART. It was not enough not to murder. If any man is angry with his brother **in his heart**, he is in danger of the fire of hell. It was not enough not to commit adultery with your body. If any man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her **in his heart**. It was not enough to give alms to the poor, or pray or fast. What mattered far more was what your **heart motive** was for each of these. These good works should be done as a secret act of devotion to God, who will reward each one. Therefore, we should not desire the fool's gold of human praise for pious deeds, but we should daily store up in heaven the true treasure of God's esteem and His future praise: *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matthew 6:21)

3. Purity of heart is the goal of the Christian faith

Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. (Psalm 51:6, ESV)

C. BUT the Human Heart is Deeply Wicked

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

Matthew 23:27 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

D. The Essence of the Saving Work of Christ: Transformation from Within

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

E. God Delights in His Son... and in Conforming Us to His Image

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)

F. Five Areas of Christian Character... and their Corresponding Virtues

- Affection: What you love and what you hate
- Desire: What you seek
- Will: What you choose and what you reject
- Thought: What you think
- Emotion: What you feel

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- Virtues: What you are

II. Affection: What You Love & Hate

A. Love is the Central Issue

1. Two Greatest Commandments

Mark 12:30-31 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

2. The Ground of Jesus' Reign: what he LOVES AND HATES

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. (Hebrews 1:9)

The heart is best described by its affections: what it loves and what it hates

B. Insights from Jonathan Edwards

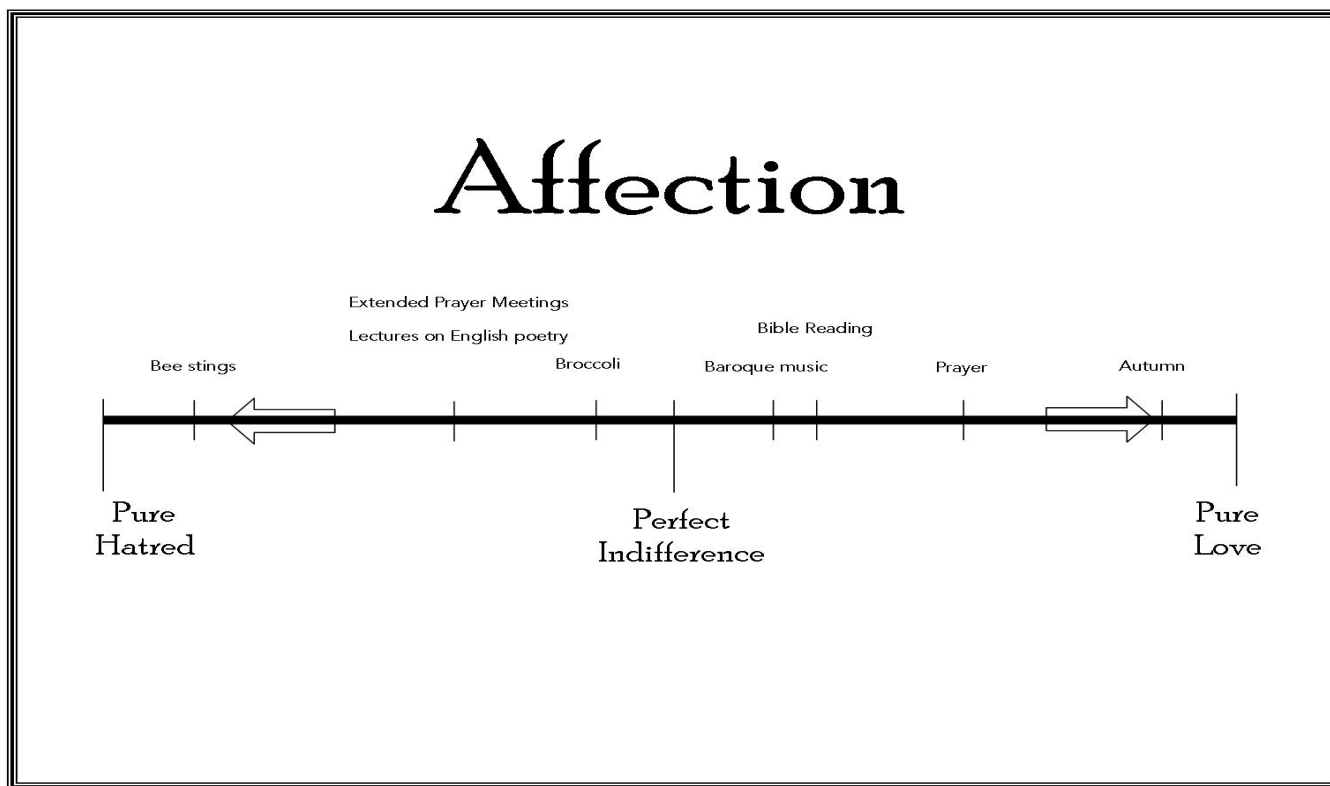
1. (1747): *Treatise on Religious Affections*

DOCTRINE. True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.

2. Affections of the heart defined:

Edwards: "God has endued the soul with two faculties: one is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns, and views, and judges of things; which is called the understanding. The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers; either is inclined to them, or is disinclined and averse from them; or is the faculty by which the soul does not behold things, as an indifferent unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting."

C. The Number Line of Affection



D. Massive Rearrangement at Regeneration

KJV 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

E. Hostility to Christ Transformed to Ultimate Affection

1. Christ dead on the cross is repulsive to the unregenerate mind

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isaiah 53:2-3)

2. Suddenly at regeneration, Christ on the cross becomes the most appealing thing in the universe!

The cross of Christ is, for us who are being saved the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24)

F. New Creation Means New Affections

1. New affections

- Above all, loving God Himself, above any created thing (Matthew 22:37)
- Cherishing Christ, His only Begotten Son, in whom God delights (Matthew 3:17; 12:18)
- Loving all human beings, created in the image of God (Matthew 22:39)
- Especially loving other Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ (Psalm 16:3, 1 John 3:14)
- Loving the poor and needy (Psalm 146:7-9)
- Delighting in God's creation, the world He made for the display of His glory ((Psalm 104:31)
- Loving God's promises, plans, will, purposes (Psalm 40:8, 119:140)
- Loving our own weaknesses and trials as they keep us humble (2 Corinthians 12:10), as well as suffering and adversity (James 1:2-4)
- Many others besides...

G. Sanctification: Loving the Light More and More

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight (Philippians 1:9);

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

H. New Hatreds as Well

Let those who love the LORD hate evil. (Psalm 97:10); To fear the LORD is to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13); Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. (Romans 12:9)

God is a passionate being! We must learn to have the same reaction to sin that He does:

“Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?” “May it never be!” Or “By no means!” Or “God forbid!” (Romans 6:1-2)

III. Desire: What You Seek

A. Christian Life a Life of Deep Longing

If we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (Romans 8:25)

B. Our Desires Patterned After God’s

1. God expresses many desires in Scripture

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. (Psalm 51:6)

For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling: “This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it—I will bless her with abundant provisions (Psalm 132:13-18)

2. Most of all, God desires us to worship Him

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23-24)

C. Christ Also Desires and Seeks

1. Central desire of His life: to do the will of God

I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart. (Psalm 40:7-8; see Hebrews 10:5)

2. His mission: to seek and to save...

The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. (Luke 19:10)

3. Another deep desire of Jesus—fellowship with us, now and forever:

I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God. (Luke 22:15-16)

D. Desire Describes the Soul

1. Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*

“The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its desires.”

2. John Piper

“The heart is a desire factory. The human heart produces desires as fire produces heat. As surely as sparks fly upward, the heart pumps out desire after desire for a happier future. The condition of the heart is appraised by the kinds of desires that hold sway. Or, to put it another way, the state of the heart is shown by the things that satisfy its desires. If it is satisfied with mean and ugly things, it is a mean and ugly heart. If it is satisfied with God, it is a godly heart.”

E. The Constant Battle with Evil Desires

1. Unregenerate life described by domination under evil desires

... gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. (Ephesians 2:3)

2. Satan’s daily menu for evil desires:

... the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride with which we imitate Satan. (1 John 2:16)

3. Evil desire is the root of all sin

Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (James 1:14-15)

F. Yearning for God Above All Things

1. Psalm 73: Psalmist overcomes materialistic envy for wicked prosperous people

When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, ²² I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. ²³ Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalm 73:21-26)

2. Moses yearns to see God’s glory

Please show me your glory! (Exodus 33:18)

3. David had the same deep desire:

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

4. Paul yearned for Christ above anything else this world holds:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:7-11)

G. Seeking God's Face Now by the Spirit

1. It is the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit to pour out the love of God into our hearts (Romans 5:5)
2. He also testifies to our hearts that we are God's children (Romans 8:16)
3. The Spirit then moves in us to ask the Father to ask Him to give us "the Holy Spirit"

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:11-13)

4. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*: testimonies throughout history of God pouring Himself out on His children in astonishing ways

[Puritan Pastor Thomas Goodwin] describes a man and his little child, his son walking down the road and they are walking hand in hand. And the child knows he is the child of his father, and he knows that the father loves him, and he rejoices in that, and he is happy in it. There is no uncertainty about it at all. But suddenly the father, moved by some impulse, takes hold of that child and picks him up, fondles him in his arms, kisses him, embraces him, showers his love upon him and then he puts him down again, and they go on walking together.

D.L. Moody: I began to cry as never before, for a greater blessing from God. The hunger increased; I really felt that I did not want to live any longer. I kept on crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day in the city of New York—oh! What a day! I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it. It is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years.

I can only say, God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand.

Thomas Goodwin: “Sue Him for it! Sue Him for it! Ask Him for it! Don’t give up!”

5. Sarah Edwards’s testimony [the wife of Jonathan Edwards]:

“That night, which was Thursday night, Jan. 28, was the sweetest night I ever had in my life. *I never before, for so long a time together, enjoyed so much of the light and rest and sweetness of heaven in my soul, but without the least agitation of body during the whole time. The great part of the night I lay awake, sometimes asleep, and sometimes between sleeping and waking. But all night I continued in a constant, clear, and lively sense of the heavenly sweetness of Christ’s excellent and transcendent love, of His nearness to me, and of my dearness to Him; with an inexpressibly sweet calmness of soul in an entire rest in Him.* I seemed to myself to perceive a glow of divine love come down from the heart of Christ in heaven, into my heart, in a constant stream, like a stream or pencil of sweet light. At the same time, my heart and soul all flowed out in love to Christ; so that there seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing of heavenly and divine love, from Christ’s heart to mine; and I appeared to myself to float or swim in these bright, sweet beams of the love of Christ, like the motes swimming in the beams of the sun or the streams of His light which come in at the window. *My soul remained in a kind of heavenly elysium.* So far as I am capable of making a comparison, I think that what I felt each minute, during the continuance of the whole time, was worth more than all the outward comfort and pleasure which I had enjoyed in my whole life put together. It was a pure delight which fed and satisfied the soul. It was *pleasure*, without the least sting or any interruption. It was a *sweetness* which my soul was lost in. It seemed to be all that my feeble frame could sustain, of that fulness of joy which is felt by those who behold the face of Christ and share His love in the heavenly world.”

H. Hungering and Thirsting After Righteousness

1. Though we are declared righteous by faith, yet we know there is still much sin in ourselves... and in the world in which we live. We YEARN for perfect righteousness

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied (Matthew 5:6, ESV)

2. What especially grieves us is indwelling sin

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Romans 7:24)

3. We long for the day when our own sin will be gone forever... and we also yearn for the day when the world will be purged of evil

I. Yearning for the Consummation of Christ’s Kingdom

1. We want to see Christ's Kingdom advancing on earth... we should yearn for it more than food and clothing, according to Matthew 6

Seek first his Kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)

2. We yearn to see Christ get what He also yearns for: the nations as His inheritance, and His enemies His footstool:

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession (Psalm 2:8)

Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. (Psalm 110:1)

3. Thus do we express this deep desire in the Lord's Prayer:

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

4. Christ's High Priestly prayer... shows what He yearns for; we should desire it too!

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. (John 17:24)

J. Prayer: Desire Stoked White Hot

1. Our desires are too weak

C.S. Lewis: If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

2. Prayer is given to strengthen our desires... like a blacksmiths' fire heats the iron red-hot until it is malleable and workable; so prayer stimulates our hearts

K. Ambition: Desire Focused as a Life Principle

1. The greatest desires are those that serve as the overarching guiding principle of life... an AMBITION
2. A Christian should have godly ambitions

Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:9)

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. (Romans 15:20)

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. (Romans 2:7-8)

L. Summary: What the Godly Seek

- God Himself above all things (Deuteronomy 4:29, Psalm 27:4)
- ... and Jesus Christ whom He sent (Philippians 3:10-11)
- God's Glory, Name, Renown (Isaiah 26:8)
- Christ's Kingdom (Matthew 6:33)
- Righteousness (Matthew 5:6)
- Personal holiness (Hebrews 12:14)
- Wisdom & Understanding (Proverbs 2:3-6)
- Refuge and protection (Psalm 61:4)
- Heaven, "Things above" (Colossians 3:1, Philippians 1:23)
- God's word (Psalm 119:45, Jeremiah 15:16)
- God's will (Psalm 40:8)
- The good of others, especially in eternity (Philippians 4:17)
- The lost (Romans 10:1)
- Peace with others (1 Peter 3:10, Hebrews 12:14)
- Glory, honor, immortality (Romans 2:7)
- Justice and relief for the oppressed and needy (Isaiah 1:17)

IV. Will: What You Choose & Reject

A. The Freedom of the Will: a constant debate among philosophers and theologians

B. The Will: the Servant of the Heart

1. The will is no loose cannon, untethered to anything else in the human being
2. The will is a servant to the two capacities of the soul Edwards described above: perception and inclination
3. As your soul understands the issues it faces and is attracted to or repulsed to everything it understands, the will is mobilized to make a choice: we choose what we love and reject what we hate

C. Free Will a Slave

But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. (Deuteronomy 1:26)

These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction. (Isaiah 30:9)

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. (John 1:11)

you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. (John 5:40)

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were **not willing**. (Matthew 23:37)*

For this reason, our salvation cannot depend on our wills

So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. (Romans 9:16)

D. The Choice of Lazarus

1. Lazarus was dead, buried in a tomb; Jesus gave him a simple command: **“Lazarus, come forth!!”**...and empowered him to obey it by resurrecting him
2. The choice of Lazarus described:

Now Lazarus was confronted with a choice, as all of us are every moment of the day: he can either obey Christ's command or disobey. However, the issue had been greatly clarified by Christ and was as straightforward as all of our decisions should be. He could either disobey and stay wrapped in graveclothes in the cold, dark tomb, or he could obey and come out, have the graveclothes removed, and be with Jesus, to celebrate the greatest miracle of His ministry in a great banquet. It was corpses and darkness vs. Jesus and sunlight.

3. Lazarus's choice: HE CAME OUT!!
4. The regenerated heart:

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and **move you to follow** my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)*

E. A Bitter Struggle for Control

1. Paul describes it in Romans 7

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (Romans 7:15)

Paul probed deeper, speaking of good desires that he, for some reason never chose to do:

I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (Romans 7:18)

When Paul acknowledges that he does what he hates, he admits a certain dual nature within us, the presence of “sin living in me.”

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. (Romans 7:17)

2. Indwelling sin sometimes “hijacks” our wills and causes us to do that which our new nature hates

F. Imitating Christ in Gethsemane

1. God made the cross vividly intensely real to Jesus

And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy. (Mark 14:33, KJV)

God in some mysterious way revealed the actual nature of the cross to Jesus

2. Jesus was overwhelmed with the desire to escape it... so much so that He was sweating great drops of blood

3. BUT:

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

4. This is the pattern for our wills for the rest of our lives!!!

G. Choosing Even Suffering for Greater Pleasure

1. We must learn to embrace a life of suffering under the cross for the greater pleasure of the eternal fruit and glory such a life produces

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

2. So we “deny ourselves daily and take up our crosses and follow Jesus” (Matthew 16:24)

H. Weighing Decisions Properly

God’s role: make the invisible realms of faith VERY VIVID to us so we decide well... based on faith, based on what we will be GLAD we did on Judgment Day

A Pathway to Christian Maturity

KNOWLEDGE

FACTUAL AND EXPERIENTIAL SPIRITUAL INFORMATION

Factual
Gained from the Scripture

Experiential
Gained from living in God's world

Leads To

Psalms 119:100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

ACTION

EXTERNAL LIFESTYLE OF HABITUAL OBEDIENCE

1. Presentation of Body to God
2. Personal Holiness
3. Seven-fold obedience to God's commands
 1. Worship
 2. Spiritual Disciplines
 3. Family
 4. Ministry to Believers
 5. Mission to Non-Believers
 6. Stewardship
 7. Work

Leads To

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

FAITH

ASSURANCE OF AND COMMITMENT TO SPIRITUAL TRUTH

- Certainty that specific invisible spiritual realities are true
- Assurance that hoped-for specific good things promised in scripture will certainly come true
- Conviction that specific sin is in me, and that God hates it and will judge people for such sins
- Reliance on Christ as all-sufficient savior, refuge, provider, shield
- Reception of spiritual guidance and knowledge

Leads To

Ephesians 3:16-17 ... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

CHARACTER

INTERNAL NATURE CONFORMED TO CHRIST

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graph TD
    A[Virtues] --> B[Affection]
    A --> C[Desire]
    A --> D[Will]
    A --> E[Thought]
    A --> F[Emotions]
            
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Leads To

Matthew 12:33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit."