

HTPC Sunday School

June 13, 2021

“Charity and Its Fruits” by Jonathan Edwards

Week Two: Charity More Excellent than the Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit

Review: Charity, or Love, the Sum of All Virtue

Background: 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 31

Lecture II: 1 Corinthians 13:1-2 — If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

The Doctrine Taught: That the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God, working the grace of charity in the heart, is a more excellent blessing than any of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.

I. What is meant by the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit?

1. Common and saving gifts of the Spirit

- Common
- Saving

2. Ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit

- Extraordinary
- Ordinary

II. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God are indeed great privileges.

1. Examples

- Moses
- David

- Elijah and Elisha
- Daniel
- the Apostles (Revelation 21:14, Ephesians 2:19-20)

2. Such extraordinary gifts of the Spirit have been looked upon as a great honor.

- Moses and Aaron (Psalm 106:16, Numbers 16)
- Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:8ff)
- the Apostle John and the angel (Rev. 19:9-10, 22:8,9)
- Daniel (Daniel 9:20-23, 10:10-19)

III. To show, that though these are great privileges, yet that the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God, working the grace of charity in the heart, is a far more excellent privilege than any of them.

1. This blessing of the saving grace of God is a quality inherent in the nature of him that is the subject of it.
2. The Spirit of God communicates himself much more in bestowing saving grace than in bestowing these extraordinary gifts.
3. That grace or holiness, which is the effect of the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, is that wherein the spiritual image of God consists; and not in these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.
4. That grace which is the effect of the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God, is a privilege which God bestows on his own favorites and children, but the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are not so.
5. From the fruit and consequence of these two different things, that the one is infinitely more excellent than the other.

6. Happiness itself does much more immediately and essentially consist in Christian grace, wrought by the ordinary influences of the Spirit, than in these extraordinary gifts.
7. This divine temper of the soul, which is the fruit of the ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit, is the end of all the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost.
8. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will be so far from profiting without that grace which is the fruit of the ordinary influences of the Spirit, that they will but aggravate the condemnation of those that have them.
9. Another thing that shows the preferableness of that saving grace which is the fruit of the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, to the extraordinary gifts, is, that one will fail, and the other will not.

Discussion

Read the following excerpt from Edwards' second sermon from pages 47-48 in the white book; page 33 in the newer tan version:

4. *“What cause have they to bless God, and to live to his glory, who have received such a privilege as is implied in the influence of the Holy Spirit working saving grace in the heart.—If we do but seriously consider the state of the godly, of those who have been the subjects of this inexpressible blessing, we cannot but be astonished at the wonderful grace bestowed upon them. And the more we consider it, the more wonderful and inexpressible it will appear. When we read in the Scriptures of the great privileges conferred on the virgin Mary, and on the apostle Paul, when he was caught up into the third heaven, we are ready to admire such privileges as very great. But after all, they are as nothing compared with the privilege of being like Christ, and having his love in the heart. Let those, then, that hope they have this last blessing, consider, more than they ever yet have done, how great a favor God has bestowed upon them, and how great their obligations to glorify him for the work he hath wrought in them, and to glorify Christ who hath purchased this blessing for them with his own blood, and to glorify the Holy Spirit who hath sealed it to their souls. What manner of persons ought such to be in all holy conversation and godliness! Consider, you that hope in God's mercy, how highly he hath advanced and exalted you; and will you not be diligent to live for him? Will you dishonor Christ so as to regard him but little, not giving him your whole heart, but going after the world, neglecting him, and his service, and his*

glory? Will you not be watchful against yourselves, against a corrupt, world, proud disposition that might lead you away from God who has been so kind to you, and from the Savior who has purchased such blessings for you, at the cost of his own agonies and death? Will you not every day make this your earnest inquiry, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?” What could God have done more for you than he has done? What privilege could he have bestowed, better in itself, or more worthy to engage your heart in thankfulness? And consider how you are living — how little you have done for him—how much you do for self — how little this divine love hath wrought in your heart to incline you to live for God and Christ, and for the extension of his kingdom. Oh, how should such as you, shew your sense of your high privileges, by the exercises of love! love that is manifest toward God in obedience, submission, reverence, cheerfulness, joy, and hope; and toward your neighbour, in meekness, sympathy, humility, charitableness, and doing good to all as you have opportunity.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Is your (my) life one marked by “blessing God,” and “living to His glory?”
2. What keeps us (me) from living this way?
3. Read Philippians 3:3-8 aloud.
 - How does Paul describe the “good things” others might say about his life?
 - What do you (I) emphasize about your (my) life when God provides the opportunity?
4. “What manner of persons ought such (who were purchased by the blood of Christ) to be in all holy conversation and godliness!”
 - What is it that is hindering you (me) from living a life like this?
 - What is one practical “exercise of love” in my life that would begin to reflect my heartfelt gratitude for all that Christ has done for me? (This may be an “exercise of love” toward God, or toward my neighbor).
5. Close with a season of prayer considering your discussions.