

Chapter 2: Shewing Wherein All Saving Grace Does Summarily Consist

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

THE next thing that arises for consideration is, What is the nature of this principle in the soul that is so entirely diverse from all that is naturally in the soul? Here I would observe,—

1. That that saving grace that is in the hearts of the saints, that within them [which is] above nature, and entirely distinguishes 'em from all unconverted men, is radically but one—i.e., however various its exercises are, yet it is but one in its root; 'tis one individual principle in the heart.

'Tis common for us to speak of various graces of the Spirit of God as though they were so many different principles of holiness, and to call them by distinct names as such,—repentance, humility, resignation, thankfulness, &c. But we err if we imagine that these in their first source and root in the heart are properly distinct principles. They all come from the same fountain, and are, indeed, the various exertions and conditions of the same thing; only different denominations according to the various occasions, objects, and manners, attendants and circumstances of its exercise. There is some one holy principle in the heart that is the essence and sum of all grace, the root and source of all holy acts of every kind, and the fountain of every good stream, into which all Christian virtues may ultimately be resolved, and in which all duty and [all] holiness is fulfilled.

Thus the Scripture represents it. Grace in the soul is one fountain of water of life, (John iv. 14,) and not various distinct fountains. So God, in the work of Regeneration, implants one heavenly seed in the soul, and not various different seeds. 1 John iii. 9 - "Whosoever is born of God cloth not commit sin; for His *seed* remaineth in him." . . . The Day [that] has arisen on the soul is but one. The oil in the vessel is simple and pure, conferred by one holy anointing. All is "wrought" by one individual work of the Spirit of God. And thus it is there is a consentation* of graces. Not only is one grace in some way allied to another, and so tends to help and promote one another, but one is really implied in the other. The nature of one involves the nature of another. And the great reason of it is, that all graces have one common essence, the original principle of all, and is but one. Strip the various parts of the Christian soul of their circumstances, concomitants. appendages means, and occasions, and consider that which is, as it were, their *soul* and essence, and all appears to be the same. [I observe]

2. That principle in the soul of the saints, which is the grand Christian virtue and

which is the soul and essence and summary comprehension of all grace, *is a principle of Divine Love*. This is evident,

(1.) *Because we are abundantly taught in the Scripture that Divine Love is the sum of all duty; and that all that God requires of us is fulfilled in it,—i.e., That Love is the sum of all duty of the heart, and its exercises and fruits the sum of all [the] duty of life. But if the duty of the heart, or all due dispositions of hearts, are all summed up in love, then undoubtedly all grace may be summed up in LOVE.*

The Scripture teaches us that all our duty is summed up in love; or, which is the same thing, that 'tis the sum of all that is required in the Law; and that, whether we take the Law as signifying the Ten Commandments, or the whole written Word of God. So when by the Law is meant the Ten Commandments: Rom, xiii 8— "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law;" and, therefore, several of these commandments are there rehearsed. And again, in ver. 10, "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." And unless love was the sum of what the Law required, the Law could not be fulfilled in Love. A law is not fulfilled but by obedience to the sum of what it contains. So the same Apostle again: 1 Tim. i a—"Now the end of the commandment is charity" [love.]

If we take the Law in a yet more extensive sense for the whole written Word of God, the Scripture still teaches us that Love is the sum of what is required in it. [Thus] Matt. xxii. 40. There Christ teaches us that on these two precepts of loving God and our neighbour hang all the Law and the Prophets,—that is, all the written Word of God. So that what was called the Law and the Prophets was the whole written Word of God that was then extant. The Scripture teacher this of each table of the Law in particular.

Thus, the Lawyer that we read of in the X.th chapter of Luke, vv. 2a-28, mentions the love of God and our neighbour as the sum of the two Tables of the Law; and Christ approves of what he says. When he stood up and tempted Christ with this question, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ asks him what was required of him "in the Law?" He makes answer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself;" and Christ replies, "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live;" as much as to say, "Do this, then thou hast fulfilled the whole Law."

So in Matthew xxii., vv. 36-38, that commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," is given by Christ himself as the sum of the first Table of the Law, in answer to the question of the Lawyer, who asked Him, "Which is the great commandment of the Law?" And in the next verse, loving our neighbours as ourselves is mentioned as the sum of the second Table, as it is also in Romans xiii. 9, where most of the precepts of the second Table are rehearsed over in particular: "For this, Thou not commit adultery,

Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'

The Apostle James seems to teach the same thing. James ii. 8— " If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well."

Thus frequent, express, and particular is the Scripture in teaching us that all duty is comprehended in Love. The Scripture teaches us, in like manner, of nothing else. This is quite another thing than if Religion in general had only sometimes gone under the name of the Love of God, as it sometimes goes by the name of the fearing of God, and sometimes the knowledge of God, and sometimes feeling of God.

This argument does fully and irrefragably prove that all grace, and every Christian disposition and habit of mind and heart, especially as to that which is primarily holy and Divine in it, does summarily consist in Divine Love, and may be resolved into it: however, with respect to its kinds and manner of exercise and its appendages, it may be diversified. For certainly there is no duty of heart, or due disposition of mind, but what is included in the " Law and the Prophets," and is required by some precept of that Law and rule which He has given mankind to walk by. But yet the Scripture affords us other evidences of the truth of this.

(2.) *The Apostle speaks of Divine Love as that which is the essence of all Christianity in the XIII.th chapter of [the] 1st [Epistle to the] Corinthians.* There the Apostle evidently means a comparison between the gifts of the Spirit and the grace of the Spirit. In the foregoing chapter the Apostle had been speaking of the gifts of the Spirit throughout, such as the gift of wisdom, the gift of knowledge, the gift of faith, the gift of healing or working miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits, speaking with tongues, &c.; and in the last verse in the chapter he exhorts the Corinthians to " covet earnestly the best gifts;" but adds, " and yet I shew you a more excellent way," and so proceeds to discourse of the saving grace of the Spirit under the name of agape' love, and to compare this saving grace in the heart with those gifts. Now,'tis manifest that the comparison is between the gifts of the Spirit that were common to both saints and sinners, and that saving grace that distinguishes true saints; and therefore, charity or love is here understood by Divines as intending the same thing as sincere grace of heart.

By love or charity here there is no reason to understand the Apostle [as speaking] only of love to men, but that principle of Divine Love that is in the heart of the saints in the full extent, which primarily has God for its object. For there is no reason to think that the Apostle doesn't mean the same thing by charity here as he does in the VIII.th chapter of the same Epistle, where he is comparing the same two things together, knowledge and charity, as he does here. But there he explains himself to mean by charity the love of God: [verses 1-3] " Now, as touching things offered

unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of Him," &c.*

'Tis manifest that Love or charity is here (chap. xiii.) spoken of as the very essence of all Christianity, and is the very thing wherein a gracious sincerity consists. For the Apostle speaks of it as the most excellent, the most necessary, and essential thing of all, without which all that makes the greatest, and fairest, and most glittering show in Religion is nothing—without which, " if we speak with the tongues of men and angels, we are become as sounding brass and tinding cymbals"—and without which, though we have " the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have all faith, so that we could remove mountains, and should bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and even give our bodies to be burned, we are nothing." Therefore, how can we understand the Apostle any otherwise than that this is the very thing whereof the essence of all consists; and that he means the same by charity as a gracious charity, as indeed it is generally understood. If a man does all these things here spoken, makes such glorious prophecies, has such knowledge, such faith, and speaks so excellently, and performs such excellent external acts, and does such great things in religion as giving all his goods to the poor and giving his body to be burned, what is wanting but one thing

The very quintessence of all Religion, the very thing wherein lies summarily the sincerity, spirituality, and divinity of Religion. And that, the Apostle teaches us, is LOVE

And further, 'tis manifestly the Apostle's drift to shew how this excellent principle does radically comprehend all that is good. For he goes on to skew how all essences of good and excellent dispositions and exercises, both towards God and towards man, are virtually contained and will flow from this one principle: " Love suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, . . . endureth all things," &c. The words of this last verse especially respects duties to God, as the former did duties to men, as I would shew more particularly afterwards.

Thus the Apostle don't only love or charity as the most excellent thing in Christianity, and as the quintessence, life and soul of all Religion, but as that which virtually comprehends all holy virtues and exercises. And because Love is the quintessence and soul of all grace, wherein the divinity and holiness of all that belongs to charity does properly and essentially consist; therefore, when Christians come to be in their most perfect state, and the Divine nature in them shall be in its greatest exaltation and purity, and be free from all mixtures, stripped of these appurtenances and that clothing that it has in the present state; and [when] it shall lose many other of its denominations, especially from the peculiar manner and exercises accommodated to the imperfect circumstances of the present state, they will be what will remain. All other names will be swallowed up in the name of charity or love, as the Apostle, agreeably to his chapter on tiers, (1 Cor. chap. xiii,) observes in verses 8-10— Charity never faileth.... But when that *which is perfect is come* then that

which is in part shall be done away." And, therefore, when the Apostle, in the last verse, speaks of charity as the greatest grace, we may well understand him in the same sense as when Christ speaks of the command to love God, &c., as the greatest commandment— viz, that among the graces, that is the source and sum of all graces, as that commanded is spoken of as the sum of all commands, and requiring that duty which is the ground of all other duties.

It must be because Charity is the quintessence and soul of all duty and all good in the bears that the Apostle says that it is " the end of the commandment," for doubtless the main end of the commandment is to promote that which is most essential in Religion and constituent of holiness.

3. *Reason bears witness to the same thing.*

(1.) *Reason testifies that Divine Love is so essential in Religion that all Religion is but hypocrisy and a " vain show " without it.* What is Religion but the exercise and expressions of regard to the Divine Being ? But certainly if there be no love to Him, there is no sincere regard to Him; and all presences and show of respect to Him, whether it be in word or deed, must be hypocrisy, and of no value in the eyes of Him who sees the heart. How manifest is it that without love there can be no true honour, no sincere praise I And how can obedience be hearty, if it be not a testimony of respect to God ? The fear of God without love is no other than the fear of devils; and all that outward respect and obedience, all that resignation, that repentance and sorrow for sin, that form in religion, that outward devotion that is performed merely from such a fear without love, is all of it a practical lie, as in Psalm lvi 3 - " . . How terrible art Thou in Thy works ! through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee." In the original it is " shall Thine enemies lie unto Thee "—i.e., shall yield a feigned or lying obedience and respect to Thee, when still they remain enemies in their hearts. There is never a devil in hell but what would perform all that many a man [has] performed in religion, that had no love to God; and a great deal more if they were in like circumstances and the like hope of gain by it, and be as much of a devil in his heart as he is now. The Devil once seemed to be religious from fear of torment: Luke viii 28 " When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High? I beseech Thee, torment me not." Here is external worship. The Devil is religious; he prays—he prays in a humble posture; he falls down before Christ, he lies prostrate; he prays earnestly, he cries with a loud voice; he uses humble expressions—"I beseech Thee, torment me not;" he uses respectful, honourable, adoring expressions—"Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High." Nothing was wanting but Loom

And with respect to duties towards men, no good offices would be accepted by men one from another, if they saw the heart, and knew they did not proceed from any respect in the heart. If a child carry it very respectfully to his father, either from a strong fear, or from hope of having the larger inheritance when his father is dead, or from the like consideration, and not at all from any respect to his father in his heart; if the child's heart were open to the view of his father, and he

plainly knew that there was no real regard to him, Would the child's outward honour and obedience be acceptable to the parent ? So if a wife should carry it very well to her husband, and not at all from any love to him, but from other considerations plainly seen, and certainly known by the husband, Would he at all delight in her outward respect any more than if a wooden image were contrived to make respectful motions in his presence ?

If duties towards men are [to be] accepted of God as a part of Religion and the service of the Divine Being, they must be performed not only with a hearty love to men, but that love must flow from regard to Him.

(2.) Reason shows *that all good dispositions and duties are wholly comprehended in, and will flow from, Divine Love.* Love to God and men implies all proper respect or regard to God and men; and all proper acts and expressions of regard to both will flow from it, and therefore all duty to both. To regard God and men in our heart as we ought, and to have that nature of heart towards them that we ought, *is* the same thing. And, therefore, a proper regard or love comprehends all virtue of heart; and he that shews all proper regard to God and men in his practice, performs all that in practice towards them which is his duty. The Apostle says, Romans. xiii 10 - " Love works no ill to his neighbour." 'Tis evident by his reasoning in that place, that he means more than is expressed—that love works no ill but all good, all our duty to our neighbour: which Reason plainly shews. And as the Apostle teaches that love to our neighbour works no ill but all good towards our neighbour; so, by a parity of reason, love to God works no ill, but all our duty towards God.

A Christian love to God, and Christian love to men, are not properly two distinct principles in the heart. These varieties are radically the same; the same principle flowing forth towards different objects, according to the order of their existence. God is the First Cause of all things, and the Fountain and Source of all good; and men are derived from Him, something of His image, and are the objects of His mercy. So the first and supreme object of Divine Love is God; and men are loved either as the children of God or His creatures, and those that are in His image, and the objects of His mercy, or in some respects related to God, or partakers of His loveliness, or at least capable of happiness.

That love to God, and a Christian love to men, are thus but one in their root and foundation-principle in the heart, is confirmed by several passages in the First Epistle of John: chap. iii. verses 16, 17— " Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, . . . how dwelleth the love of God in him ?" Chap. iv. 20, 21—"If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen] And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." Chap. v. 1, 2 "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that

we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments."

Therefore to explain the nature of Divine Love, what is principally requisite is to explain the nature of love to God. For this may especially be called Divine Love; and herein all Christian love or charity does radically consist, for this is the fountain of all.

As to a definition of Divine Love, things of this nature are not properly capable of a definition. They are better felt than defined. Love is a term as clear in its signification, and that does as naturally suggest to the mind the thing signified by it, as any other term or terms that we can find out or substitute in its room. But yet there may be a great deal of benefit in descriptions that may be given of this heavenly principle though they all are imperfect. They may serve to limit the signification of the term and distinguish this principle from other things, and to exclude counterfeits, and also more clearly to explain some things that do appertain to its nature.

Divine Love, as it has God for its object, may be thus described. 'Tis the soul's relish of the supreme excellency of the Divine nature, inclining the heart to God as the chief good

The first thing in Divine Love, and that from which everything that appertains to it arises, is a relish of the excellency of the Divine nature; which the soul of man by nature has nothing of

The first effect that is produced in the soul, whereby it is carried above what it has or can have by nature, is to cause it to relish or taste the sweetness of the Divine relation. That is the first and most fundamental thing in Divine Love, and that from which everything else that belongs to Divine Love naturally and necessarily proceeds. When once the soul is brought to relish the excellency of the

Divine nature, then it will naturally, and of course, incline to God every way. It will incline to be with Him and to enjoy Him. It will have benevolence to God. It will be glad that He is happy. It will incline that He should be glorified, and that His will should be done in all things. So that the first effect of the power of God in the heart in REGENERATION, is to give the heart a Divine taste or sense; to cause it to have a relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the Divine nature; and indeed this is all the immediate effect of the Divine Power that there is, this is all the Spirit of God needs to do, in order to a production of all good effects in the soul. If God, by an immediate act of His, gives the soul a relish of the excellency of His own nature, other things will follow of themselves without any further act of the Divine power than only what is necessary to uphold the nature of the faculties of the soul. He that is once brought to see, or rather to taste, the superlative loveliness of the Divine Being, will need no more to make him long after the enjoyment of God, to make him rejoice in the happiness of God, and to desire that this supremely excellent Being may be pleased and glorified. And if this be true, then the main ground of true love to God is the excellency of His own nature, and not any benefit we have received, or hope to receive, by His goodness to us. Not but that there is such a thing as a gracious gratitude to God for mercies

bestowed upon us; and the acts and fruits of His goodness to us may [be,] and very often are, occasions and incitements of the exercise of true love to God, as I must shew more particularly hereafter. But love or affection to God, that has no other good than only some benefit received or looped for from God, is not true love. [If it be] without any sense of a delight in the absolute excellency of the Divine nature, [it.] has nothing Divine in it. Such gratitude towards God requires no more to be in the soul than that human nature that all men are born with, or at least that human nature well cultivated and improved, or indeed not further vitiated and depraved than it naturally is. It is possible that natural men, without the addition of any further principle than they have by nature, may be affected with gratitude by some remarkable kindness of God to them, as that they should be so affected with some great act of kindness of a neighbour. A principle of self-love is all that is necessary to both. But Divine Love is a principle distinct from self-love, and from all that arises from it. Indeed, after a man is come to relish the sweetness of the supreme good there is in the nature of God, self-love may have a hand in an appetite after the enjoyment of that good. For self-love will necessarily make a man desire to enjoy that which is sweet to him. But God's perfections must first savour appetite and [be] sweet to men, or they must first have a taste to relish sweetness in the perfection *of* God, before self-love can have any influence upon them to cause an appetite after the enjoyment of that sweetness. And therefore that divine taste or relish of the soul, wherein Divine Love cloth most fundamentally consist, is prior to all influence that self-love can have to incline us to God; and so must be a principle quite distinct from it, and independent of it.



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