

CHARITY & ITS FRUITS

A Study of 1 Corinthians 13 based on the sermons of Jonathan Edwards

Sermon 2

“Love More Excellent Than Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit”

1 Corinthians 13:1-2

Introduction

One must understand the _____ situation that the early church (under the apostles) was under. Edwards writes, “Those days in which the Apostle wrote this epistle were days in which the Spirit of God was not only poured out in His ordinary influences in awakening and convincing and converting sinners, and building up saints, but was also poured out abundantly in extraordinary or miraculous gifts, such as the gifts of prophecy, and working of miracles, and the like. The first age of the church till the death of all the apostles, which was about an hundred years after the birth of Christ, is often, by divines and historians, called the age of miracles.” (58)

Giving direction to the rest of his sermon Edwards writes, “We may observe to which of these two things here compared the preference is give, viz. that Christian love which we have before observed is the summary comprehension of all saving grace. This is spoken of as far preferable to those extraordinary gifts just mentioned, to whatever degree they are possessed...this is a more excellent way than to seek spiritual gifts, because it was charity which was a more excellent _____ than those gifts.” (60)

Doctrine- “The ordinary influences of God’s Spirit, working saving grace in the heart, is a more excellent _____ than any of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.”

One must make some distinction when discussing the gifts of the Spirit. “And here I would observe that divines are wont to make a twofold distinction of the gifts and operations of the Spirit, viz. into _____ and _____, and ordinary and extraordinary.” (60)

Here Edwards makes the distinction that the extraordinary gifts fall under the category of _____ (meaning any person God can give these to). Whereas, the ordinary gifts fall under the category of saving. (ex. Saul, Balaam, Judas, Matt. 7)

Although naturally we want to elevate the extraordinary gifts, Edwards is going to drive home that the ordinary gifts are more excellent. Again, this cuts against our natural thinking but biblical truth typically does that. “To show that though these are great privileges (the extraordinary gifts), yet that the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God working grace in the heart is a _____ privilege than any of them; a greater privilege than the spirit of prophecy, or the gift of tongues, or working miracles even to the moving of mountains; a greater blessing than all those miraculous gifts which Moses, and Elijah, and Daniel, and the twelve apostles were endued with.” (66)

Edwards lists several (nine total) reasons why the ordinary gifts of the Spirit are superior to the extraordinary.

Reason 1: “This blessing of the saving grace of God is a quality inherent in the _____ of him who is the subject of it. The gift of the Spirit of God, working a saving Christian temper and exciting gracious exercises, confers a blessing which has its seat in the heart; a blessing which makes a man’s heart and nature excellent. Yea, the very excellency of the nature consists in it. Now it is not so with respect to those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. They are excellent things, but not properly the excellency of man’s nature; for they are not things which are inherent in the nature...And though most commonly those who have these extraordinary gifts of prophecy, speaking with tongues, and working miracles have been holy persons, yet their holiness did not consist in their having these gifts; but holiness consists in having grace in the heart: grace and holiness are the same thing. Extraordinary gifts are nothing properly inherent in the man.” (66)

Reason 2: “The Spirit of God communicates itself much more in bestowing those extraordinary gifts. In those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit the Holy Ghost does indeed produce effects the man, or by the man; but not so as

properly to communicate _____ in His own proper nature to the man...When the Spirit by His ordinary influences bestows saving grace, He therein imparts Himself to the soul in His own holy nature...if God gives only extraordinary gifts...these alone will never make him a partaker of the Spirit so as to become spiritual in himself and in his own nature.” (67)

Reason 3: “The spiritual image of God does not consist in having a power to work miracles, and foretell future events; but it consists in our being _____, as God is holy...” (67)

Reason 4: “The grace of God in the heart is a gift of the Holy Ghost peculiar to the _____. It is a blessing which God reserves only for those who are the objects of His special and peculiar love. But the extraordinary gifts are what God sometimes bestows on those for whom He has no love, but whom He hates; which is a sure sign that the other is an infinitely more precious and excellent gift than these. That is the most precious gift which is most of an evidence of God’s love. But the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were no sure sign of it.” (68)

Reason 5: “When Christ promised the disciples the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as casting out devils, and other extraordinary gifts, He bids them not to rejoice that the devils were subject to them; but rather that they should rejoice because their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20). This shows that grace which is the effect of the ordinary gift of the Spirit is infinitely greater blessing than the extraordinary, since it carries _____ life in it.” (69)

Reason 6: “Man’s highest _____ consists in holiness. It is by this the reasonable creature is united to God, the fountain of all good.” (69)

Reason 7: “God gave such gifts as prophecy, and the working of miracles, and speaking with tongues to the end to promote and establish _____ religion, and propagate the gospel.” (70)

Reason 8: “The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will be so far from profiting without that grace, which is the effect of the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, that it will but aggravate the _____ of those who have them.” (71)

Reason 9: “Another thing which shows the preferableness of the ordinary gifts of the Spirit to the extraordinary gifts is that one will _____, the others will not...Divine love will remain throughout eternity.” (73)

Application

To incite thankfulness in the saints for such a great salvation Edwards writes, “Saving grace in the heart is the _____ and blessing which God ever bestows on any person in this world...Great was the privilege which God bestowed on David in taking him from the sheepcote, from following sheep, and making him ruler over Israel. Great was the privilege which God bestowed on Solomon in choosing him to build an house for the name of the Lord. Great was the privilege which God bestowed on the blessed virgin Mary, in granting that of her should be born the Son of God...But yet, surely that was not so great a privilege as it was to have the grace of God in the heart, to have Christ, as it were, born in the soul.” (74)

In thinking of Christian assurance, he writes, “All the fruit of the Spirit, upon which we are to lay weight as _____ of grace, is summed up in charity or Christian love, because this is the sum of all grace.” (76)

To help saints not long for a more “super-spiritual age” on earth he writes, “For by the doctrine we learn that the pouring out of the Spirit of God in His ordinary saving operations to fill men’s hearts with a Christian and holy temper, and leading them to the exercises of a divine life, is the _____ way of pouring out the Spirit, more glorious than a pouring out of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.” (77)

To increase _____ for a godly life the closing paragraph of his sermon includes these lines, “Let those, therefore, who are thus highly favored, consider more than ever yet they have done, how great that blessing is which God has bestowed upon them of His mere free love and sovereign grace, and not for any worthiness of theirs; and how great obligations they are under to glorify God: and to glorify Christ, who hath purchased this blessing with His own blood. What manner of persons ought you to be! Pray consider! (78)