

## CHARITY & ITS FRUITS

### Sermon 14- Divine Love Alone Lasts Eternally

**“Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.” 1 Cor. 13:8**

In this verse we see the Apostle Paul continuing his argument for the \_\_\_\_\_ of divine love to all other Christian virtues. Similar to how the Apostle Paul began this chapter he here shows how Christian charity is more excellent than the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Edwards writes, “He now proceeds further and declares how it not only endures to the end of time, but also throughout eternity. ‘Charity never faileth.’ When all tongues and things shall fail, this shall abide.”

When the Apostle here mentions prophecies, tongues, and knowledge he is referring to supernatural gifts that the Spirit in times past bestowed upon people. In his discussion on knowledge here he writes, “The knowledge which Christians have of God and Christ and heavenly things shall not vanish away, but shall only be gloriously increased, and brought to perfection. But by that knowledge which the Apostle here speaks of, which he says shall vanish away, he means only a particular, miraculous gift which there was in the church of God in those days; for the Apostle is here comparing charity with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as has been heretofore observed... You see that gift of knowledge is mentioned among these, which was a different thing from that speculative knowledge which is obtained by reason and study, or that spiritual and divine knowledge which persons have by the saving influences of the Spirit on the soul. It was a particular gift of the Spirit with which some persons were endued whereby they were enabled by immediate \_\_\_\_\_ to understand mysteries, or the mysterious prophecies and types of Scripture.”

**Doctrine-**That great fruit of the Spirit in which the Holy Ghost shall not only for a season but everlastingly be communicated to the church of Christ is divine love.

The **first** thing Edwards wants us to understand is that the Holy Spirit is what Christ has \_\_\_\_\_ for His people. We mustn't lose sight of the Holy Spirit by instead focusing on “spiritual gifts”.

“The Spirit of Christ is given to His church and people forever, everlastingly to influence them and dwell in them. The Holy Spirit is the great purchase of Christ... The sum of all those good things in this life, and the life to come, which are purchased for the church is the Holy Spirit... And this great purchase of Christ is \_\_\_\_\_ given to His church. He has promised that His church shall continue, and expressly declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Therefore when Christ promises His Spirit, He promises the continuance of it forever.”

“Christ is become theirs, and therefore His fullness is theirs, His Spirit is theirs, the Spirit of Christ is their purchased and promised \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Secondly**, Edward's would have us remember that there are \_\_\_\_\_ fruits of the Holy Spirit besides those that are connected to divine love.

“The Spirit of God has been communicated to the church in many extraordinary gifts, which are the gifts of miraculous \_\_\_\_\_... such gifts as the gifts of prophecy and tongues, and the gift called the gift of knowledge, and other mentioned in the context in the foregoing chapters.”

“Besides these there are the common and \_\_\_\_\_ gifts of the Spirit of God which in all ages have been bestowed on many natural men; such as common convictions of sin, common illuminations, common religious affections, which, though they have nothing of the nature of divine love or true and saving grace, yet are the fruits of the Spirit or the effects of His influence on the hearts of men.”

The **third** truth to know is that all of these “other” fruits of the Spirit are \_\_\_\_\_. Here Edwards is going to see the Apostle Paul teaching a cessationist view of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

“Those other fruits of the Spirit are but for a season, and either have failed or will fail. As to those miraculous gifts of prophecy, and the gift of tongues, and others, they are but a temporary use. They have not continued in heaven... Those gifts are not fruits of the Spirit which are always given and continued to the church throughout the ages. They were continued in the church, or at least granted from time to time, though not without some considerable intermissions from the beginning of the world till the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Scripture was completed.”

The **fourth** and final truth that Edwards here declares is that divine love is the \_\_\_\_\_ fruit of the Spirit which is eternal and never fails.

“That divine love is that great fruit of the Spirit of Christ which \_\_\_\_\_ fails, and in which His continued and everlasting influence and indwelling in His church appears...this is the fruit of the Spirit which never fails or ceases in the church of Christ, whether we consider the church with respect to its particular members, or whether we consider it as a collective body.”

“\_\_\_\_\_ one of the true members of Christ’s invisible church are possessed of this fruit in their hearts. Divine or Christian love is implanted there, and dwells there, and reigns there, and it is an everlasting fruit of the Spirit...When the Apostles and others died and went to heaven, they left their gifts of tongues and other miraculous gifts behind them with their bodies. But they did not leave that divine love which was in their hearts behind them, but carried that to heaven with them, where it was gloriously perfected.”

“Though other fruits of the Spirit fail in it, this never fails. Of old when there were intermissions or interruptions of the continuance of miraculous gifts of the Spirit in the church, or times in which no prophet or inspired person appeared who was possessed of them, yet there never was any \_\_\_\_\_ interruption of this fruit or influence of the Spirit...As God ever had a church of the saints in the world from the first creation of the church after the Fall, so this influence of the Spirit never failed in it.”

Edwards then gives the reason why it is only divine love that endures.

“The great reason why it is so that other fruits of the Spirit fail and this remains is that this is the \_\_\_\_\_ of those other fruits of the Spirit. The principle and the exercises of divine love in the heart, and the fruits of it in behavior, and that happiness which consist in it are the end of all those other fruits of the Spirit which fail. Divine love is the end of which all the inspiration and all the miracles which ever were in the world were but the means. Those were only certain means of grace, but divine love is the grace; it is itself the sum of all grace.”

**Application**-there are three ways this doctrine can instruct us

1. We need not think that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will be returned to the church.

“When the Spirit of God is poured out for the producing and promoting divine love, He is poured out in a more excellent way than when He is poured out in miraculous gifts, as the Apostle expressly teaches in the latter part of the foregoing chapter...Doubtless the most excellent way of giving the Spirit is for the most excellent state of the church. That state of the church being so much more perfect than any which went before does not argue that then there shall be extraordinary gifts...Prophecy and miracles argue the imperfection of the state of the church, rather than the perfection. For they are the means proper and designed by God rather as a stay and support, or as leading strings, if I may say so, to the church in a state of infancy rather than as means adapted to its state of full growth. And the Apostle seems to speak of them as such. When the Christian church first began after Christ’s ascension that was the \_\_\_\_\_ of the church, and then it needed miracles and prophecies to establish it. But being once established, and the canon of Scripture completed, they ceased.”

“The Apostle seems to call these gifts of prophecy and working miracles \_\_\_\_\_ things in comparison with the nobler fruit of the Spirit, divine love...If we needed any new rule to guide us, if the canon of Scripture were imperfect, there would indeed be some need of restoring miracles, and revelations, and prophecy. For it is impossible the canon of the Scripture should be added to without revelation, which is a miraculous gift...But we have no need of another Scripture...We have a perfect rule already by which to walk.”

2. With this being the case “this should make persons exceedingly \_\_\_\_\_ how they give heed to anything which looks like revelation, or any extraordinary gift of the Spirit.”
3. This should teach us to \_\_\_\_\_ divine love in the heart above all other things.

“Let us therefore earnestly seek this blessed fruit of the Spirit; and let us seek that it may \_\_\_\_\_ in our hearts, that the love of God may more and more be shed abroad in our hearts, and that we may love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and love one another as Christ hath loved us. Hereby, we shall possess that which never fails.”