

CHARITY  
AND ITS FRUITS;

OR,

CHRISTIAN LOVE AS MANIFESTED IN THE  
HEART AND LIFE.

BY

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## LECTURE XI.

### ALL TRUE GRACE IN THE HEART TENDS TO HOLY PRACTICE IN THE LIFE.

“Charity . . . rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”—

Cor. xiii. 6.

HAVING mentioned, in the two preceding verses, many of the good fruits of charity, and shown how it tends to an excellent behaviour in many particulars, the apostle now sums up these and all other good tendencies of charity, in respect to active conduct, by saying, “It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” As if he had said, “I have mentioned many excellent things that charity has a tendency to, and shown how it is contrary to many evil things. But I need not go on to multiply particulars, for, in a word, charity is contrary to everything in the life and practice that is evil, and tends to everything that is good—it rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

By “iniquity,” seems to be intended here everything that is sinful in the life and practice; and by “the truth,” everything that is good in the life, or all that is included in Christian and holy practice. The word *truth* is, indeed, variously used in the Bible. Sometimes it means the true doctrines of religion; sometimes the knowledge of these doctrines; sometimes veracity or faithfulness; and sometimes it signifies all virtue and holiness, including both the knowledge and reception of all the great truths of the Scriptures, and conformity to these in the life and conduct. In this last sense the word is used by the apostle John, when he says, “I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth” (3 John 3). Taking the word in this sense, and generalising the proposition, we have, as suggested by the text, the doctrine,

THAT ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN GRACE IN THE HEART TENDS TO HOLY PRACTICE IN THE LIFE.

*Negatively*, the apostle declares that charity is opposed to all wickedness, or evil practice; and, *positively*, that it tends to all righteousness, or holy practice. And as the principle may be generalised, and also as charity has been shown to be the sum of all true and saving grace, the doctrine that has been stated seems clearly contained in the words of the text, viz. the doctrine, that *all true Christian grace tends to holy practice*. If any have the notion of grace, that it is something put into the heart, there to be confined and dormant, and that its influence does not govern the man throughout *as an active being*—or if they suppose that the change made by grace, though it indeed betters the heart itself, yet has no tendency to a corresponding improvement of the outward life—they have a very wrong notion. And that

this is so, I would endeavour to make plain, first, by some arguments in favour of the doctrine that has been stated; and, second, by showing its truth with respect to particular graces. And,

I. *I would state some arguments in support of the doctrine, that all true grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life.* And,

1. *Holy practice is the aim of that eternal election which is the first ground of the bestowment of all true grace.*—Holy practice is not the ground and reason of election, as is supposed by the Arminians, who imagine that God elects men to everlasting life upon a foresight of their good works; but it is the aim and end of election. God does not elect men because he foresees they will be holy, but that he may make them, and that they may be holy. Thus, in election, God ordained that men should walk in good works, as says the apostle, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. ii. 10). And again it is said, that the elect are chosen to this very end—“He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love” (Eph. i. 4). And so Christ tells his disciples, “I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John xv. 16). Now God’s eternal election is the first ground of the bestowment of saving grace. And some have such saving grace, and others do not have it, because some are from eternity chosen of God, and others are not chosen. And seeing that holy practice is the scope and aim of that which is the first ground of the bestowment of grace, this same holy practice is doubtless the tendency of grace itself. Otherwise it would follow, that God makes use of a certain means to attain an end, which is not fitted to attain that end, and has no tendency to it. It is further true,

2. *That redemption, by which grace is purchased, is to the same end.*—The redemption made by Christ is the next ground of the bestowment of grace on all who possess it. Christ, by his merits, in the great things that he did and suffered in the world, has purchased grace and holiness for his own people—“For their sakes,” he says, “I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John xvii. 19). And Christ thus redeemed the elect, and purchased grace for them, to the end that they might walk in holy practice. He has reconciled them to God by his death, to save them from wicked works, that they might be holy and unblameable in their lives, says the apostle—“And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight” (Col. i. 21, 22). When the angel appeared to Joseph, he told him that the child that should be born of Mary should be called Jesus, that is, Saviour, because he should save his people from their sins (Matt. i.

21). And holiness of life is declared to be the end of redemption, when it is said of Christ, that he “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus ii. 14). And so we are told that Christ “died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. v. 15). And for this end, he is said to have offered himself, through the eternal Spirit, without spot to God, that his blood might purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. ix. 14).

The most remarkable type of the work of redemption by divine love in all the Old Testament history, was the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt. But the holy living of his people was the end God had in view in that redemption, as he often signified to Pharaoh, when from time to time he said to him by Moses and Aaron, “Let my people go, that they may serve me.” And we have a like expression concerning Christ’s redemption in the New Testament, where it is said, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, . . . to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luke i. 68-75). All these things make it very plain that the end of redemption is, that we might be holy. Still further it is true,

3. *That effectual calling, or that saving conversion in which grace is commenced in the soul, is to the same end.*—God, by his Spirit, and through his truth, calls, awakens, convicts, converts, and leads to the exercise of grace, all those who are made willing in the day of his power, to the end that they might exercise themselves in holy practice. “We are his workmanship,” says the apostle, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. ii. 10). And the apostle tells the Christian Thessalonians, that God had not called them unto uncleanness, but unto holiness (1 Thess. iv. 7). And again it is written, “As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Pet. i. 15). It is also true,

4. *That spiritual knowledge and understanding, which are the inward attendants of all true grace in the heart, tend to holy practice.*—A true knowledge of God and divine things is a practical knowledge. As to a mere speculative knowledge of the things of religion, many wicked men have attained to great measures of it. Men may possess vast learning, and their learning may consist very much of their knowledge in divinity, and of the Bible, and of the things pertaining to religion, and they may be able to reason very strongly about the attributes of God and the doctrines of Christiani-

ty, and yet herein their knowledge fails of being a saving knowledge, that it is only speculative and not practical. He that has a right and saving acquaintance with divine things, sees the excellency of holiness, and of all the ways of holiness, for he sees the beauty and excellency of God, which consist in his holiness; and, for the same reason, he sees the hatefulnes of sin, and of all the ways of sin. And if a man knows the hatefulnes of the ways of sin, certainly this tends to his avoiding these ways; and if he sees the loveliness of the ways of holiness, this tends to incline him to walk in them.

He that knows God, sees that he is worthy to be obeyed. Pharaoh did not see why he should obey God, because he did not know who he was, and therefore he says—“Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go “(Exod. v. 2). This is signified to be the reason why wicked men work or practise iniquity, and carry themselves so wickedly, that they have no spiritual knowledge, as says the Psalmist—“Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord” (Ps. xiv. 4). And when God would describe the true knowledge of himself to the people of Israel, he does it by this fruit of it, that it led to holy practice—“He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him. Was not this to know me? saith the Lord “(Jer. xxii. 16). And so the apostle John informs us that the keeping of Christ’s commands is an infallible fruit of our knowing him; and he stigmatises him as a gross hypocrite and liar who pretends that he knows Christ, and does not keep his commandments (1 John ii. 3, 4). If a man has spiritual knowledge and understanding, it tends to make him to be of an excellent spirit. “A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit “(Prov. xvii. 27). And such an excellent spirit will lead to a corresponding behaviour. And the same appears, also,

*5. From the more immediate consideration of the principle of grace itself, from which it will be seen that the tendency of all Christian grace is to practice.—And here,*

*First,* It appears that all true Christian grace tends to practice, because *the faculty which is the immediate seat of it is the faculty of the will, which is the faculty that commands all a man’s actions and practice.* The immediate seat of grace is in the will or disposition. And this shows that all true grace tends to practice; for there is not one of man’s acts that can properly be said to belong to or to be any part of his practice, in any respect but that it is at the command of the will. When we speak of a man’s practice, we have respect to those things that he does as a free and voluntary agent, or, which is the same thing, to those things that he does by an act of his will; so that the whole of a man’s practice is directed by the faculty of the will. All the executive powers of the man, whether of body or mind, are subject to the faculty of the will by the constitution of Him who hath made man, and who is the

great author of our being. The will is the fountain of the practice, as truly as the head of a spring is the fountain of the stream that flows from it. And, therefore, if a principle of true grace be seated in this faculty, it must necessarily tend to practice; as much as the flowing of water in the fountain tends to its flowing in the stream.

*Second*, It is the definition of grace, *that it is a principle of holy action*. What is grace but a principle of holiness, or a holy principle in the heart? But the word "*principle*" is relative to something, of which it is a principle. And if grace be a principle, what is it a principle of, but of action? Principles and actions are correlates, that necessarily have respect one to the other. Thus, the very idea of a principle of life is a principle that acts in the life. And so, when we speak of a principle of understanding, we mean a principle whence flow acts of understanding. And so by a principle of sin is meant a principle whence flow acts of sin. And, in the same manner, when we speak of a principle of grace, we mean a principle whence flow acts of grace, or gracious actions. A principle of grace has as much a relation to practice as a root has to the plant that it is the root of. If there be a root, it is the root of something; either the root of something that actually grows from it, or that tends to bring forth some plant. It is absurd to speak of a root that is the root of nothing; and so it is absurd to speak of a principle of grace that does not tend to grace in the practice.

*Third*, One more thing, by which that which is real and substantial is distinguished from that which is only a shadow or appearance, is, *that it is effectual*. A shadow or picture of a man, though it be ever so distinct or well drawn, or give ever so lively a representation, and though it be the picture of a very strong man, or even of a mighty giant, can do nothing. There is nothing accomplished and brought to pass by it, because it is not real, but only a shadow or image. The substance, or reality, however, is something that is effectual. And so it is with what is in the heart of man. That which is only an appearance or image of grace, though it looks like grace, is not effectual, because it wants reality and substance. But that which is real and substantial is effectual, and does indeed bring something to pass in the life. In other words, it acts itself out in practice. And so again,

*Fourth*, The nature of a principle of grace *is to be a principle of life, or a vital principle*. This we are everywhere taught in the Scriptures. There, natural men, who have no principle of grace in the heart, are represented as dead men, while those that have grace are represented as being alive, or having the principle of life in them. But it is the nature of a principle of life to be a principle of action and operation. A dead man does not act, or move, or bring anything to pass; but in living persons, the life appears by a continued course of action from day to day. They move, and walk, and work, and fill up their time with actions that are the fruits of life.

*Fifth*, True Christian grace is not only a principle of life, *but an exceedingly powerful principle*. Hence we read of “the power of godliness,” as in 2 Tim. iii. 5; and are taught that there is in it a divine power, such as was wrought in Christ when he was raised from the dead. But the more powerful any principle is, the more effectual it is to produce those operations and that practice to which it tends.

Having thus shown, in general, that all true grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life, I proceed, as was proposed,

II. *To show the same with respect to the particular Christian graces.*—And here, I remark, that this is the case,

1. *With respect to a true and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.*—This is one thing that very much distinguishes that faith which is saving from that which is only common. A true faith is a faith that works; whereas a false faith is a barren and inoperative faith. And therefore the apostle describes a saving faith as a “faith that worketh by love” (Gal. v. 6). And the apostle James tells us, “A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (Jas. ii. 18). But more particularly,

*First*, The *conviction of the understanding and judgment*, which is implied in saving faith, *tends to holy practice*. He that has true faith is convinced of the reality and certainty of the great things of religion; and he that is convinced of the reality of these things will be influenced by them, and they will govern his actions and behaviour. If men are told of great things, which, if true, do most intimately concern them, and do not believe what they are told, they will not be much moved by them, nor will they alter their conduct for what they hear. But if they do really believe what they are told, and regard it as certain, they will be influenced by it in their actions, and in view of it will alter their conduct, and will do very differently from what they would if they had heard nothing. We see that this is so in all things of great concern that appear real to men. If a man hears important news that concerns himself, and we do not see that he alters at all for it in his practice, we at once conclude that he does not give heed to it as true; for we know the nature of man is such, that he will govern his actions by what he believes and is convinced of. And so if men are really convinced of the truth of the things they are told in the gospel, about an eternal world, and the everlasting salvation that Christ has purchased for all that will accept it, it will influence their practice. They will regulate their behaviour according to such a belief, and will act in such a manner as will tend to their obtaining this eternal salvation. If men are convinced of the certain truth of the promises of the gospel, which promise eternal riches, and honours, and pleasures, and if they really believe that those are immensely more valuable than all the riches, and honours, and pleasures of the world, they will, for these, forsake the

things of the world, and, if need be, sell all and follow Christ. If they are fully convinced of the truth of the promise, that Christ will indeed bestow all these things upon his people, and if all this appears real to them, it will have influence on their practice, and it will induce them to live accordingly. Their practice will be according to their convictions. The very nature of man forbids that it should be otherwise. If a man be promised by another that if he will part with one pound he will give him a thousand, and if he is fully convinced of the truth of this promise, he will readily part with the former in the assurance of obtaining the latter. And so he that is convinced of the sufficiency of Christ to deliver him from all evil, and to bring him to the possession of all good that he needs, will be influenced in his practice by the promise which offers him all this. Such a man, while he actually has such a conviction, will not be afraid to believe Christ in things wherein he otherwise would seem greatly to expose himself to calamity, for he is convinced that Christ is able to deliver him. And so he will not be afraid to forego other ways of securing earthly happiness, because he is convinced that Christ alone is sufficient to bestow all needed happiness upon him. And so,

*Second, That act of the will, which there is in saving faith, tends to holy practice.* He that, by the act of his will, does truly accept of Christ as a Saviour, accepts of him as a Saviour from *sin*, and not merely as a Saviour from the *punishment* of sin. But it is impossible that any one should heartily receive Christ as a Saviour from sin, and from all the ways of sin, if he has not willed and does not aim, sincerely, in heart and life, to turn from all the ways of sin; for he that has not willed that sin and he should part, cannot have willed to receive Christ as his Saviour to part them. And so he, again, that receives Christ by a living faith, closes with him as a Lord and King to rule over and reign in him, and not merely as a priest to make atonement for him. But to choose Christ, and close with him as a King, is the same as to yield in submission to his law, and in obedience to his authority and commands; and he that does this, lives a life of holy practice.

*Third, All the true trust in God, that is implied in saving faith, tends to holy practice.* And herein a true trust differs from all false trust. A trust in God in the way of negligence, is what in Scripture is called tempting God; and a trust in him in the way of sin, is what is called presumption, which is a thing terribly threatened in his Word. But he that truly and rightly trusts in God, trusts in him in the way of diligence and holiness; or, which is the same thing, in the way of holy practice. The very idea of our trusting in another, is, resting or living in acquiescence of mind and heart in the full persuasion of his sufficiency and faithfulness, so as to be ready fully to venture on him in our actions. But they that do not practise and act upon the persuasion of another's sufficiency and faithfulness, do not thus venture. They do not enter on any action or course of action in such a confidence, and so ven-



ture nothing, and therefore cannot be said truly to trust. He that really trusts in another, ventures on his confidence. And so it is with those that truly trust in God. They rest in the full persuasion that God is sufficient and faithful, so as to proceed in this confidence to follow God, and, if need be, to undergo difficulties and hardships for him, because he has promised that they shall be no losers by such a course; and they have such a confidence of this, that they can and do venture upon his promise, while those who are not willing thus to venture, show that they do not trust in him. They that have the full trust in God which is implied in a living faith, will not be afraid to trust God with their estates. It is so with respect to trust in men, that if those we have full confidence in desire to borrow anything of us, and promise to pay us again, and to pay us a hundredfold, we are not afraid to venture, and do actually venture it. And so those that feel full confidence in God, are not afraid to lend to the Lord. And so, if we trust in God, we shall not be afraid to venture labour, and fighting, and watching, and suffering, and all things for him, since he has so abundantly promised to reward these things with that which will infinitely more than make up for all the losses or difficulties or sorrows we may experience in the way of duty. If our faith be saving, it will lead us thus actually to venture on God, in the fullest trust in his character and promises. And as faith, in itself, and in all that is implied in it, tends to holy practice, so the same is the case,

2. *With respect to all true love to God.*—Love is an active principle—a principle that we always find is active in things of this world. Love to our fellow-creatures always influences us in our actions and practice. The whole world of mankind are chiefly kept in action from day to day, and from year to year, by love of some kind or another. He that loves money is influenced in his practice by that love, and kept by it in the continual pursuit of wealth. He that loves honour is governed in his practice by that love, and his actions through the whole of life are regulated by his desire for it. And how diligently do they that love carnal pleasures pursue after them in their practice! And so he that truly loves God is also influenced by that love in his practice. He constantly seeks after God in the course of his life: seeks his grace, and acceptance, and glory.

Reason teaches that a man's actions are the most proper test and evidence of his love. Thus, if a man professes a great deal of love and friendship to another, reason, in such a case, teaches all mankind that the most proper evidence of his being a real and hearty friend, as he professes to be, is his appearing a friend in his deeds, and not only in his words; and that he shall be willing, if need be, to deny himself for his friend, and to suffer in his own private interest for the sake of doing him a kindness. If a man professes ever so much kindness or friendship, a wise man will not trust the profession, except as he sees the trial and proof of it in the behaviour; unless in his ac-

tions he has found him a faithful and constant friend, ready to do and suffer for him. He will trust to such evidence of his love, more than he will to the greatest professions or even the most solemn oaths without it. And so, if we see a man who, by his constant behaviour, shows himself ready to take pains and lay himself out for God, reason teaches, that in this he gives an evidence of love to God, more to be depended on than if he only professes that he feels great love to God in his heart. And so, if we see a man who, by what we behold of the course of his life, seems to follow and imitate Christ, and greatly lay himself out for Christ's honour and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, reason teaches, that he gives greater evidence of the sincerity and strength of his love to the Saviour than if he only declares that he loves Him, and tells how his heart at such and such a time was drawn out in love to Him, while at the same time he is backward to do any great matter for Christ, or to put himself out of the way for the promotion of his kingdom, and is ready to excuse himself when called to active effort or self-denial for his Saviour's sake.

There are various ways for the exercise of sincere love to God, and they all tend to holy practice. One is, in having a high *esteem* for God; for that which we love we have the highest esteem for, and naturally show this esteem in our behaviour. Another way of showing our love to God is, in making *choice* of him above all other things; and if we do sincerely choose him above all other things, then we shall actually leave other things for him when it comes to the trial in our practice: and when, in the course of our life, it comes to pass that God and our honour, or God and our money, or God and our ease, are at the same time set before us, so that we must cleave to the one and forsake the other, then, if we really choose God above these other things, we shall in our practice cleave to God, and let these things go. Another way of the exercise of love to God is, in our *desires* after him; and these also tend to practice. He that really has earnest desires after God, will be stirred up actively to seek after him. He will apply himself to it as a business, just as men do for this world when they have earnest desires for a good which they believe is attainable. And still another way of the exercise of love to God is, in *delighting* in him, and finding satisfaction and happiness in him; and this also tends to practice. He that really and sincerely delights more in God than in other things, and finds his satisfaction in God, will not forsake God for other things; and thus, by his conduct, he shows that he indeed is satisfied in him as his portion. And so it is in all cases. If we have had enjoyment in any possession whatever, and then afterward forsake it for something else, this is an evidence that we were not fully satisfied with it, and that we did not delight in it above all other things. In all these cases, the feelings and choices will be seen in the practice.

3. *All true and saving repentance tends to holy practice.*—In the original

of the New Testament, the word commonly rendered “repentance” signifies *a change of the mind*; and men are said to repent of sin when they change their minds with respect to it, so that, though formerly they esteemed and approved of it, they now utterly disapprove and dislike it. But such a change of the mind must and does tend to a corresponding change of the practice. We see it to be so universally in other things. If a man has heretofore been engaged in any pursuit or business whatever, and then changes his mind upon it, he will change his practice also, and will cease from that business or pursuit, or way of life, and turn his hand to some other. Sorrow for sin is one thing belonging to saving repentance. But sorrow for sin, if it be thorough and sincere, will tend, in practice, to the forsaking of sin. And so it is in everything. If a man has long gone on in any one way or manner of behaviour, and afterwards is convinced of the foolishness and sinfulness of it, and is heartily sorry and grieved for it, the natural and necessary effect of this will be, that he will avoid it for the future. And if he goes on in it just as he did before, no one will believe that he is heartily sorry for having gone on in time past. Again,

4. *All true humility tends to holy practice.*—This is a grace abundantly recommended and insisted on in the Bible, and which is often spoken of as distinguishing a true Christian experience from that which is counterfeit. But this grace in the heart has a direct tendency to holy practice in the life. An humble heart tends to an humble behaviour. He that is sensible of his own littleness, and nothingness, and exceeding unworthiness, will be disposed, by a sense of it, to carry himself accordingly both before God and man. He that once was of a proud heart, and under the dominion of pride in his conduct, if afterward he has his heart changed to an humble heart, will necessarily have a corresponding change in his behaviour. He will no longer appear in his demeanour as proud, and scornful, and ambitious as once he was, affecting as much as ever to appear above others, and striving as much after it, and as apt to condemn others, and to be dissatisfied or even enraged with those that seem to stand in the way of his earthly glory. For that which such a behaviour in him arose from, before he was changed, was pride of heart; and, therefore, if now there be a great alteration with respect to this pride of heart, and it be mortified and banished from the soul, and humility implanted in its place, surely there will be an alteration, also, in the demeanour and practice; for humility of heart is a principle that has as strong a tendency to practice as pride of heart has; and therefore, if the latter be mortified, and the former take its place, then the proud practice that proceeded from the former will proportionably cease, and the humble practice which is the natural fruit of the latter will be manifest.

True Christian humility of heart tends also to make persons resigned to the will of God, and to lead them to be patient and submissive to his holy

hand under the afflictions he may send, and to be filled with deep reverence toward the Deity, and to treat divine things with the highest respect. It leads also to a meek behaviour toward men, making us condescending to inferiors, respectful to superiors, and toward all gentle, peaceful, easy to be entreated, not self-willed, not envious of others, but contented with our own condition, of a calm and quiet spirit, not disposed to resent injuries, but apt to forgive. And surely these are traits that belong to holy practice. And so again,

5. *All true fear of God tends to holy practice.*—The principal thing meant in the Scriptures by the fear of God, is a holy solicitude or dread lest we should offend God by sinning against him. Now, if a man do truly fear to offend God, and if he habitually dreads the thought of sinning against him, this will surely tend to his avoiding sin against him. That which men are afraid of they will shun. If a man professes that he is afraid and has a dread of a poisonous serpent, for example, but at the same time is seen to take no care to shun him, but is very bold to keep near to him, who will believe his profession? Fearing God and observing to do all his commandments, are joined together as necessarily arising the one from the other, as in Deut. xxviii. 58—“If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God.” And Joseph gives as a reason of his righteous and merciful conduct towards his brethren, that he feared God, as may be seen in Gen. xlii. 18. And in Prov. viii. 13, it is said, that “the fear of the Lord is to hate evil.” Job gives it as a reason why he avoided sin, that “destruction from God was a terror to him” (Job xxxi. 23). And God himself, when he speaks of Job as “eschewing evil,” mentions his fear of God as the ground and reason of it (Job i. 8). And in any person whatever, just so far as the fear of God reigns, just so far will it lead its possessor to avoid sin and to aim to be holy. Again,

6. *The spirit of thankfulness and praise tends to holy practice.*—Sincere thankfulness to God leads us to render again according to the benefits received. This we look upon as a sure evidence of true gratitude or thankfulness toward our fellow-men. If any one does his neighbour any remarkable kindness, and he is really thankful for it, he will be ready, when an occasion offers, to do him a good in return. And though we cannot requite God’s kindness to us by doing anything that shall be profitable to him, yet a spirit of thankfulness will dispose us to do what we can, which is well-pleasing or acceptable to him, or which may tend to his declarative glory. If one man should take pity on another who was in some great distress, or in danger of some terrible death, and, moved by this pity, should greatly lay himself out for his defence and deliverance, and should undergo great hardships and sufferings in order to it, and by these means should actually deliver him; and if

the latter should express great thankfulness toward his deliverer, and yet in his actions and course of conduct should oppose and dishonour and cast contempt upon him, and do him great injury, no one would give much heed to all his professions of thankfulness. If he is truly thankful, he will never act thus wickedly toward his benefactor. And so no man can be truly thankful to God for the dying love of Christ, and for the infinite mercy and love of God toward himself, and yet lead a wicked life. His gratitude, if sincere, will lead him to be holy. The same is true, again,

7. *Of a Christian weanedness from the world, and of heavenly-mindedness, that they tend to holy practice.*—And I speak of the two together, for they are very much the same thing, expressed negatively and positively. Not to be weaned from the world, is the same thing as to be worldly-minded; and, on the other hand, to have a truly Christian weanedness from the world, is to be not worldly, but heavenly-minded. And this grace, like all the others mentioned, tends to holy practice. If the heart be taken off from the world, it will tend to take off the pursuits from the world; and if the heart be set on heavenly things, which are things not of the world, it will tend to lead us to pursue the things that are heavenly. He that has his heart loose from the world, will not practically keep the world close in his grasp, as being exceeding loath to part with any of it. If a man, speaking of his experience, tells how, at some given time, he felt his heart weaned from the world, so that the world seemed as nothing and vanity to him, and yet if in practice he seems as violent after the world as ever, and a great deal more earnest after it than he is after heavenly things, such as growth in grace, and in the knowledge of God, and in duty, then his profession will have but little weight in comparison with his practice. And so, if his conduct shows that he thinks more of treasure on earth than of treasure in heaven, and if, when he has got the world, or some part of it, he hugs it close, and appears exceedingly reluctant to let even a little of it go for pious and charitable uses, though God promises him a thousand-fold more in heaven for it, he gives not the least evidence of his being weaned from the world, or that he prefers heavenly things to the things of the world. Judging by his practice, there is sad reason to believe that his profession is in vain. The same is true, also,

8. *Of the spirit of Christian love to men, that this also tends to holy practice.*—If the spirit of love to man be sincere, it will tend to the practice and deeds of love. That is a hypocritical, and not a sincere love, that appears only in word and tongue, and not in deed; but that love which is sincere, and really a true love, will be manifest in the deeds, as says the apostle, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” (1 John iii. 18, 19). No other love to brethren, except that which shows itself in deeds of love, will profit any man. “If a brother or sis-

ter be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" (James ii. 15, 16.)

Experience shows, that those who cherish a sincere love toward others, are ready both to do and suffer for them. We are very ready to believe that parents love their own children, because this is natural; and such a love generally prevails throughout the world. But, incredible as it is that a man should not love his own children, yet, if there was a father that beheld his child in suffering circumstances, and would not put himself out of the way to relieve him, or that did not ordinarily treat his children with consideration and kindness, but acted from day to day as though he were utterly careless of their comfort, or as to what became of them, we should scarcely believe that he had anything of a father's love in his heart. Love to our children will dispose us to loving deeds to our children. And so love to our neighbour will dispose us to all manner of good practice toward our neighbour. So the apostle declares, when, after summing up the several commandments of the second table of the law, he says, "And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and then adds, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 9, 10). Once more, and lastly, the same remark applies,

9. *To a true and gracious hope, that this also tends to holy practice.*—A false hope has a tendency just the reverse of this. It tends to licentiousness—to encourage men in their sinful desires and lusts, and to flatter and embolden them even when they are in the way of evil. But a true hope, so far from hardening men in sin, and making them careless of their duty, tends to stir them up to holiness of life, to awaken them to duty, and to make them more careful to avoid sin, and more diligent in serving God. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John iii. 3). A gracious hope has this tendency, from the nature of the happiness hoped for, which is a holy happiness; a happiness that the more a man seeks and hopes for, the more he is quickened and enlivened in the disposition to be holy. And it also has this tendency from the respect it has to the author of the happiness hoped for; for it hopes for it from God, as the fruit of his undeserved and infinite mercy; and, therefore, by every motive of gratitude, the heart is engaged and stirred up to seek that which is well-pleasing to him. And it has the same tendency from a regard to the means by which it hopes to obtain this happiness; for a true hope looks forward to the obtaining of happiness in no other way but the way of the gospel, which is by a holy Saviour, and in a way of cleaving to and following him. And it has, lastly, the same tendency by the influence of that which is the immediate source of all

gracious hope, which is faith in Christ; and such faith always works, and works by love, and purifies the heart, and brings forth holy fruits in the life.

Thus it has been shown, first by general arguments, and then by an induction of particulars, wherein all the principal Christian graces have been mentioned, that all true grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life, just as truly as the root of the plant tends to growth in the plant itself, or as light has a tendency to shine, or the principle of life to manifest itself in the actions of the living person.

In the application of the subject,

1. *We may see one main reason why Christian practice and good works are so abundantly insisted on in the Scriptures as an evidence of sincerity in grace*—Christ has given it as a rule to us, that we are to judge men by their fruits (Matt. vii. 10-20); and he insists on it, in a very emphatic manner, that the one that keeps his commandments is the one that truly loves him (John xiv. 21); and declares that the man that loves him will keep them, and the man that does not love him will not keep them (John xiv. 23, 24). Hence we may see the reason why the apostle Paul so much insisted on this point, declaring to those to whom he wrote, that if any pretended to belong to the kingdom of God, and yet did not keep God's commandments, they were either hypocrites or self-deceivers. His language is, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. v. 5, 6). "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10). "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24). "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom. viii. 13). And all this teaches us the reason why the same thing is so much insisted on by the apostle James, in various places with which you are familiar, and by the apostle John, more than almost any other subject. It is because God would have it deeply impressed on all, that good works are the only satisfying evidence that we are truly possessed of grace in the soul. It is by our practice that God judges us here on earth, and it is by our practice that he will judge us all at the great and final day.

2. *In view of this subject, let all examine themselves, whether their grace is real and sincere.*—Let everyone diligently and prayerfully ask whether their graces all tend to practice, and are seen from day to day in the life and conduct. But here even some truly godly persons may be ready to say, that if they judge themselves by their practice, they must condemn themselves, for

they fail so much and so frequently, and are so often wandering out of the way, that at times it scarcely seems that they can be the children of God. But to such I answer, that persons who try themselves by their practice, may find that they greatly fail every day, and are often wandering out of the way, and yet they may really see no just cause in their practice to condemn themselves. For when we speak of a life of Christian practice, and when the Scriptures speak of the course of life as Christian, the meaning is not, that the life is a perfect and sinless life; on the contrary, a Christian's life may be attended with many and exceeding great imperfections, and yet be a holy life, or a truly Christian life. It may be such a life as to clearly, and even necessarily show, that the grace which the individual has, is of the kind which has a tendency to holy practice. His fruits may be such as to be good evidence of the good nature of the tree, and his works such as to show his faith. And if you ask for still further light, then I would say, whatever your imperfections and failings may be, examine yourself whether you find the following evidences of your grace being of that kind which tends to holy practice.

*First, Has your supposed grace such influence as to render those things in which you have failed of holy practice, loathsome, grievous, and humbling to you? Has it such influence in your mind as to render your past sinful practices hateful in your eyes, and has it led you to mourn before God for them? And does it render those things in your conduct that, since your supposed conversion, have been contrary to Christian practice, odious in your eyes? And is it the great burden of your life, that your practice is no better? Is it really grievous to you, that you have fallen, or do fail into sin? and are you ready, after the example of holy Job, to abhor yourself for it, and repent in dust and ashes? and, like Paul, to lament your wretchedness, and pray to be delivered from sin, as you would from a body of death?*

*Second, Do you carry about with you, habitually, a dread of sin? Do you not only mourn, and humble yourself for sins that are past, but have you a dread of sin for the future? And do you dread it because in itself it is evil, and so hurtful to your own soul, and offensive to God? Do you dread it as a terrible enemy that you have often suffered by, and feel that it has been a grievous thing to you heretofore? And do you dread it as something that has hurt, and wounded, and stung you, so that you would see it no more? Do you stand on your watch against it, as a man would keep watch against something that he dreads, with such a dread as led Joseph to say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9.)*

*Third, Are you sensible of the beauty and pleasantness of the ways of holy practice? Do you see the beauty of holiness, and the loveliness of the ways of God and Christ? It is said in the text that "charity rejoiceth in the truth;" and it is given as the character of the truly godly, that "he rejoiceth*



and worketh righteousness,” which is the same as saying that “he rejoices to work righteousness.” And how often does the Psalmist speak of the law of God as being his delight, and of his love to the divine commandments!

*Fourth, Do you find that you do particularly esteem and delight in those practices that may, by way of eminence, be called Christian practices, in distinction from mere worldly morality?* And by Christian practices are meant such as are implied in a meek, humble, prayerful, self-denying, self-renouncing, heavenly walk and behaviour. Some of the heathen have been eminent for many of the moral virtues, and wrote excellently about them, as, for example, of justice, and generosity, and fortitude, &c.; but they were far from a Christian poverty of spirit and lowliness of mind. They sought their own glory, and gloried exceedingly in their outward virtues, and seemed to know nothing of such a walk as the gospel commands, a walk of self-emptiness, and poverty of spirit, and self-distrust, and self-renunciation, and prayerful reliance on God. They were strangers to meekness, and did not allow, or even dream, that the forgiveness and love of enemies was a virtue. Such virtues as these are peculiarly Christian virtues, and Christian by way of distinction and eminence, and of these it is, that I ask, if you hold them in special esteem, for your Saviour’s sake, and because they are fraught with his spirit? If you are essentially distinguished and different in your spirit from the mere moralist, or the heathen sage or philosopher, you will have a spirit of special esteem for and delight in those virtues that do especially belong to the gospel.

*Fifth, Do you hunger and thirst after a holy practice?* Do you long to live a holy life, to be conformed to God, to have your conduct, day by day, better regulated, and more spiritual, more to God’s glory, and more such as becometh a Christian? Is this what you love, and pray for, and long for, and live for? This is mentioned by Christ, as belonging to the character of true Christians, that they “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Does this trait belong to you?

*Sixth, Do you make a business of endeavouring to live holily, and as God would have you, in all respects?*

Not only can you be said to endeavour after holiness, but do you make a *business* of endeavouring after it? Is it a matter that lies with weight upon your mind? A true and faithful Christian does not make holy living a mere incidental thing, but it is his great concern. As the business of the soldier is to fight, so the business of the Christian is to be like Christ, to be holy as he is holy. Christian practice is the great work that he is engaged in, just as the race was the great work of the racers. Is this so with you? And is it your great aim and love to keep *all* God’s commandments, and so far as known to neglect none? “Then,” says the Psalmist, “I shall not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.” Is this your serious, constant, and

prayerful aim, that you may be faithful in every known duty? And once more,

*Seventh, Do you greatly desire that you may know all that is your duty?* And do you desire to know it that you may do it? With the patriarch Job, can you, and do you, pray to the Almighty, “That which I see not, teach thou me,” adding, as he added, to the great Searcher of hearts, “If I have done iniquity, I will do no more”?

If you can honestly meet these tests, then you have the evidence that your grace is of the kind that tends to holy practice, and to growth in it. And though you may fall, through God’s mercy you shall rise again. He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. Though you may be at times faint, yet, if pursuing, you shall be borne on from strength to strength, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.