

CHARITY
AND ITS FRUITS;

OR,

CHRISTIAN LOVE AS MANIFESTED IN THE
HEART AND LIFE.

BY

JONATHAN EDWARDS,

SOMETIME PASTOR OF THE CHURCH AT NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS, AND
PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS,
WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY THE

REV. TRYON EDWARDS, D.D.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.
M.DCCC.LII.

LECTURE XIV.

CHARITY, OR TRUE GRACE, NOT TO BE OVERTHROWN BY OPPOSITION.

“Charity . . . endureth all things.”—1 Cor. xiii. 7.

IN these words, and in saying previously that “charity suffereth long,” and again, that it “beareth all things,” the apostle is commonly understood as making statements of substantially the same signification as though the three expressions were synonymous, and all of them only said the same things in different words.

But this idea is doubtless from a misunderstanding of his meaning. For if we closely consider these various expressions, and the manner in which they are used, we shall find that every one of them signifies or points to a different fruit of charity. Two of these expressions have already been considered, viz. that “charity suffereth long,” and that it “beareth all things;” and the former was shown to have reference to the bearing of injuries received from men, and the latter to the spirit that would lead us to undergo all sufferings to which we might be called for Christ’s sake, and rather than to forsake him or our duty. And this expression of the text, that charity “endureth all things,” signifies something different from either of the other statements.

It expresses *the lasting and abiding nature of the principle of charity, or true grace in the soul*, and declares that it will not fail, but will continue and endure, notwithstanding all the opposition it may meet with, or that may be brought against it. The two expressions, “beareth all things,” and “endureth all things,” as in our English translation, and as commonly used, are indeed very much of the same import. But the expression of the original, if literally translated, would be, “charity remains under all things;” that is, it still remains, or still remains constant and persevering under all opposition that may come against it. Whatever assaults may be made upon it, yet it still remains and endures, and does not cease, but bears up, and bears onward with constancy and perseverance and patience, notwithstanding them all.

According to the explanation that has been given of the four expressions of this verse, “beareth,” “believeth,” “hopeth,” and “endureth all things,” the meaning of the apostle appears easy, natural, and agreeable to the context. He is endeavouring to set forth the universal benefit of charity, or a spirit of Christian love. And to show how it is the sum of all good in the heart, he first shows how it disposes to all good behaviour towards men, and sums up that matter by saying that charity “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” And then he proceeds, and declares that charity not only disposes to doing and suffering in the cause of Christ, but that it includes a suffering

spirit, so that it “beareth all things;” and that it does this by promoting the two graces of faith and hope, which are mainly occupied in sufferings in the cause of Christ; for such sufferings are the trials of our faith; and what upholds the Christian under them, is the hope of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to be given to the faithful in the end; and charity cherishes this faith and hope, and, as the fruit of this faith and hope, it endures all things, and perseveres, and holds out, and cannot be conquered by all the opposition made against it; for faith overcomes the world, and hope in God enables the Christian always to triumph in Christ Jesus.

The doctrine, then, that I would derive from the text, is,

THAT CHARITY, OR TRUE CHRISTIAN GRACE, CANNOT BE OVERTHROWN BY ANYTHING THAT OPPOSES IT.

In speaking to this doctrine, I would, *first*, notice the fact that many things do oppose grace in the heart of the Christian; *second*, advert to the great truth, that it cannot be overthrown; and, *third*, state some reasons why it cannot be shaken, but remains firm under all opposition. And,

I. *There are many things that do greatly oppose the grace which is in the heart of the Christian.*—This holy principle has innumerable enemies watching and warring against it. The child of God is encompassed with enemies on every side. He is a pilgrim and stranger passing through an enemy’s country, and exposed to attack at any and every moment. There are thousands of devils, artful, intelligent, active, mighty, and implacable, that are bitter enemies to the grace that is in the heart of the Christian, and do all that lies in their power against it. And the world is an enemy to this grace, because it abounds with persons and things that make opposition to it, and with various forms of allurements and temptation, to win or drive us from the path of duty. And the Christian has not only many enemies without, but multitudes within his own breast, that he carries about with him, and from which he cannot get free. Evil thoughts and sinful inclinations cling to him; and many corruptions that still hold their footing in his heart are the worst enemies that grace has, and have the greatest advantage of any in their warfare against it. And these enemies are not only many, but exceeding strong and powerful, and very bitter in their animosity—implacable, irreconcilable, mortal enemies, seeking nothing short of the utter ruin and overthrow of grace. And they are unwearied in their opposition, so that the Christian, while he remains in this world, is represented as being in a state of warfare, and his business is that of the soldier, insomuch that he is often spoken of as a soldier of the cross, and as one whose great duty it is to fight manfully the good fight of faith.

Many are the powerful and violent assaults that the enemies of grace make upon it. They are not only constantly besieging it, but often they assault it as a city that they would take by storm. They are always lurking and

watching for opportunity against it, and sometimes they rise up, in dreadful wrath, and endeavour to carry it by urgent assault. Sometimes one enemy, and sometimes another, and sometimes all together, with one consent, buffeting it on every side, and coming in like a flood, are ready to overwhelm it, and to swallow it up at once. Sometimes grace, in the midst of the most violent opposition of its enemies fighting against it with their united subtlety and strength, is like a spark of fire encompassed with swelling billows and raging waves, that appear as if they would swallow it up and extinguish it in a moment. Or it is like a flake of snow falling into the burning volcano; or rather like a rich jewel of gold in the midst of a fiery furnace, the raging heat of which is enough to consume anything except the pure gold, which is of such a nature that it cannot be consumed by the fire.

It is with grace in the heart of a Christian, very much as it is with the church of God in the world. It is God's post; and it is but small, and great opposition is made against it by innumerable enemies. The powers of earth and hell are engaged against it, if possible to destroy it; and oftentimes they rise with such violence, and come with such great strength against it, that if we were to judge only by what appears, we should think it would be taken and destroyed immediately. It is with it as it was with the children of Israel in Egypt, against whom Pharaoh and the Egyptians united all their craft and power, and set themselves to endeavour to extirpate them as a people. It is with it as it was with David in the wilderness, when he was hunted as a partridge on the mountains, and driven about by those that sought his life from one desert or cave to another, and several times was chased out into a strange land. And it is with it as it has been with the Christian church under the heathen and antichristian persecutions, when all the world, as it were, united their strength and wit to exterminate it from the earth, destroying thousands and millions with the utmost cruelty, and by the most bloody persecutions, without respect to sex or age. But,

II. *All the opposition that is or can be made against true grace in the heart, cannot overthrow it.*—The enemies of grace may, in many respects, gain great advantages against it. They may exceedingly oppress and reduce it, and bring it into such circumstances that it may seem to be brought to the very brink of utter ruin. But yet it will live. The ruin that seemed impending shall be averted. Though the roaring lion sometimes comes with open mouth, and no visible refuge appears, yet the lamb shall escape and be safe. Yea, though it be in the very paw of the lion or the bear, yet it shall be rescued, and not devoured. And though it even seems actually swallowed down, as Jonah was by the whale, yet it shall be brought up again, and live. It is with grace in the heart, in this respect, as it was with the ark upon the waters—however terrible the storm may be, yea, though it be such a deluge as overwhelms all things else, yet it shall not overwhelm that. Though the

floods rise ever so high, yet it shall be kept above the waters; and though the mighty waves may rise above the tops of the highest mountains, yet they shall not be able to get above this ark, but it shall still float in safety. Or it is with this grace as it was with the ship in which Christ was when there arose a great storm, and the waves ran high, insomuch that it seemed as if the ship would instantly sink; and yet it did not sink, though it was actually covered with water, for Christ was in it.

And so, again, grace in the heart is like the children of Israel in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. Though Pharaoh strove ever so much to destroy them, they yet grew and prospered. And when, at last, he pursued them with all his army, and with chariots and horsemen, and they were pent up by the Red Sea, and saw no way of escape, but seemed to themselves to be on the very brink of ruin, yet they did escape, and were not delivered a prey to their foes. Yea, they were preserved in passing through the very sea itself, for the waters opened before them, and, when they had safely passed over, rolled back and overwhelmed their foes. And they were preserved for a long time in the desolate wilderness, in the midst of pits and drought and fiery flying serpents. Thus, as the gates of hell can never prevail against the church of Christ, so neither can they prevail against grace in the heart of the Christian. The seed remaineth, and none can root it out. The fire is kept alive even in the midst of the floods of water; and though it often appears dim, or as if it were just going out, so that there is no flame, but only a little smoke, yet the smoking flax shall not be quenched.

And grace shall not only remain, but at last shall have the victory. Though it may pass through a long time of sore conflicts, and may suffer many disadvantages and depressions, yet it shall live; and not only live, but it will finally prosper and prevail and triumph, and all its enemies shall be subdued under its feet. As David in the wilderness, though he was long kept in very low and distressed circumstances, pursued by his potent enemies, and many times apparently on the brink of ruin, where there seemed but a step between him and death, was yet through all preserved, and at last exalted to the throne of Israel, and to wear the royal crown in great prosperity and with glory; so we see it is with grace, that it can never be overthrown; and its depressions do but prepare the way for its exaltation. Where it does truly exist in the heart, all its enemies cannot destroy it, and all the opposition made against it cannot crush it. It endures all things, and stands all shocks, and remains notwithstanding all opposers. And the reason of this may be seen in these two things:

1. *That there is so much more in the nature of true grace that tends to perseverance than in false grace.*—False grace is a superficial thing, consisting in mere outward show, or in superficial affections, and not in any change of nature. But true grace reaches to the very bottom of the heart. It

consists in a new nature, and therefore it is lasting and enduring. Where there is nothing but counterfeit grace, corruption is unmortified; and whatever wounds may seem to be given it, they are but slight wounds, that do not at all reach its life, or diminish the strength of its principle, but leave sin in its full strength in the soul, so that it is no wonder that it ultimately prevails, and bears down all before it. But true grace really mortifies sin in the heart. It strikes at its vitals, and gives it a wound that is mortal, sending its stroke to the very heart. When it first enters the soul, it begins a never-ceasing conflict with sin; and therefore it is no wonder that it keeps possession, and finally prevails over its enemy. Counterfeit grace never dispossesses sin of the dominion of the soul, nor destroys its reigning power there, and therefore it is no wonder that it does not itself remain. But true grace is of such a nature that it is inconsistent with the reigning power of sin, and dispossesses the heart of it as it enters, and takes the throne from it, and therefore is the more likely to keep its seat there, and finally to prevail entirely against it.

Counterfeit grace, though it may affect the heart, yet is not founded on any real conviction of the soul. But true grace begins in real and thorough conviction, and, having such a foundation, has so much the greater tendency to perseverance. Counterfeit grace is not diligent in prayer; but true grace is prayerful, and thus lays hold on the divine strength to support it, and indeed becomes divine itself, so that the life of God is, as it were, imparted to it. Counterfeit grace is careless whether it perseveres to the end or not; but true grace naturally causes earnest desires for perseverance, and leads to hungerings and thirstings for it. It also makes men sensible of the dangers they are encompassed with, and has a tendency to excite them to watchfulness, and to care and diligence that they may persevere, and to look to God for help, and trust in him for preservation from the many enemies that oppose it. And,

2. God will uphold true grace, when he has once implanted it in the heart, against all opposition.—He will never suffer it to be overthrown by all the force that may be brought against it. Though there be much more in true grace that tends to perseverance than there is in counterfeit grace, yet nothing that is in the nature of grace, considered by itself and apart from God's purpose to uphold it, would be sufficient to make sure its continuance, or effectually to keep it from final overthrow. We are kept from falling, not by the inherent power of grace itself, but, as the apostle Peter tells us (1 Pet. i. 5), "by the power of God through faith." The principle of holiness in the hearts of our first parents, where it had no corruption to contend with, was overthrown; and much more might we expect the seed of grace in the hearts of fallen men, in the midst of so much corruption, and exposed to such active and constant opposition, would be overthrown, did not God uphold it. He has undertaken to defend it from all its enemies, and to give it the victory at last, and therefore it shall never be overthrown. And here I

would briefly show how it is evident that God will uphold true grace, and not suffer it to be overthrown, and then show some reasons why he will not suffer it.

First, I would show *how it is evident that God will uphold true grace in the heart*. And, in one word, it is evident from his promise. God has explicitly and often promised that true grace shall never be overthrown. It is promised in that declaration concerning the good man (Ps. xxxvii. 24), that “though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand;” and again in the words, Jer. xxxii. 40, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;” and again, in those words of Christ (Matt. xviii. 14), that “it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” And in accordance with these various declarations, Christ has promised concerning grace (John iv. 14), that it shall be in the soul “as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” And again he says (John vi. 39), “This is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” And in other places it is said, that Christ’s sheep “shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand” (John x. 27); that whom God “did foreknow, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified;” and that nothing “shall separate” Christians “from the love of Christ” (Rom. viii. 29, 30, 35); and again, that “he which hath begun a good work” in us, “will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. i. 6); and again, that Christ “shall confirm “his people” unto the end, that” they “may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. i. 8); and still again, that “he is to able to keep” them “from falling, and to present” them “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). And many other similar promises might be mentioned, all of which declare that God will uphold grace in the heart in which he has once implanted it, and that he will keep to the end those who put their trust in him. But,

Second, I would briefly show *some reasons why God will uphold the principle of grace, and keep it from being overthrown*. And, in the *first* place, unless the redemption provided by Christ secured our perseverance through all opposition, it would not be a complete redemption. Christ died to redeem us from the evil we were subject to under the law, and to bring us to glory. But if he brought us no further than the state we were in at first, and left us as liable to fall as before, then all his redemption might be made void, and come to nothing. Man, before the fall, being left to the freedom of his own will, fell from his steadfastness, and lost his grace when he was comparatively strong, and not exposed to the enemies that now beset him.

What then could he do in his present fallen state, and with such imperfect grace, in the midst of his powerful and manifold enemies, if his perseverance depended on himself alone? He would utterly fall and perish; and the redemption provided by Christ, if it did not secure him from thus falling, would be a very imperfect redemption.

In the *second* place, the covenant of grace was introduced to supply what was wanting in the first covenant, and a sure ground of perseverance was the main thing that was wanting in it. The first covenant had no defect on the part of God who constructed it; in that respect it was most holy and just, and wise and perfect. But the result proved that on our part it was wanting, and needed something more in order to its being effectual for our happiness; and the thing needed was something that should be a sure ground of our perseverance. All the ground we had under the first covenant was the freedom of our own will; and this was found not to be depended on; and therefore God has made another covenant. The first was liable to fail, and therefore another was ordained more enduring than the first, and that could not fail, and which therefore is called “an everlasting covenant.” The things that could be shaken are removed, to make way for those that cannot be shaken. The first covenant had a head and surety that was liable to fail, even the father of our race; and therefore God has provided, as the head and surety of the new covenant, one that cannot fail, even Christ, with whom, as the head and representative of all his people, the new covenant is made, and ordered in all things and sure.

In the *third* place, it is not fit that, in a covenant of mercy and saving grace, the reward of life should be suspended on man’s perseverance, as depending on the strength and steadfastness of his own will. It is a covenant of works, and not a covenant of grace, that suspends eternal life on that which is the fruit of a man’s own strength, to keep him from falling. If all is of free and sovereign grace, then free grace has undertaken the matter to complete and finish it, and has not left it to men themselves, and to the power of their own wills, as it was under the first covenant. As divine grace has commenced the work, it will finish it; and therefore we shall be kept to the end.

In the *fourth* place, our second surety has already persevered, and done what our first surety failed of doing; and therefore we shall surely persevere. Adam, our first surety, did not persevere, and so all fell with him. But if he had persevered, all would have stood with him, and never would have fallen. But our second surety has already persevered, and therefore all that have him for their surety will persevere with him. When Adam fell, he was condemned, and all his posterity was condemned with him, and fell with him. But if he had stood, he would have been justified, and so would have partaken of the tree of life, and been confirmed in a state of life, and all his posterity would have been confirmed. And, by parity of reason, now that Christ,

the second Adam, has stood and persevered, and is justified, and confirmed in life, all who are in Christ and represented by him, are also accepted, and justified, and confirmed in him. The fact that he, as the covenant-head of his people, has fulfilled the terms of that covenant, makes it sure that they shall persevere.

In the *fifth* place, the believer is already actually justified, and thus entitled, through the promise of mercy, to eternal life, and therefore God will not suffer him to fail and come short of it. Justification is the actual acquittal of the sinner. It is a full acquittance from guilt, and freedom from condemnation, and deliverance from hell, and acceptance to a full title to eternal life. And all this is plainly inconsistent with the idea that deliverance from hell, and the attainment of eternal life, are yet suspended on an uncertain perseverance.

In the *sixth* place, the Scriptures teach us, that the believer's grace and spiritual life are a partaking of the life of Christ in his resurrection, which is an immortal and unfading life. This is plainly taught by the apostle, when he says (Col. ii. 13), "You hath he quickened together with him," that is, with Christ; and again (Eph. ii. 4-6), "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" and still again (Gal ii. 20), "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." These expressions show that the believer's spiritual life cannot fail; for Christ says (Rev. i. 18), "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore;" and the apostle says, (Rom. vi. 9), "Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Our spiritual life being his life, as truly as the life of the branch is the life of the tree, cannot but continue.

In the *seventh* place, grace is that which God hath implanted in the heart against the great opposition of enemies, and therefore he will doubtless maintain it there against their continued and combined efforts to root it out. The enemies of God and the soul used their utmost endeavours to prevent grace being implanted in the heart that possesses it. But God manifested his all-conquering and glorious power in introducing it there in spite of them all. And therefore he will not at last suffer himself to be conquered by their expelling that which he by his mighty power has so triumphantly brought in. From all which it is plain, that God will uphold the principle of grace in the heart of the Christian, so that it shall never be overthrown or fail.

In the application of this subject,

1. *We may learn one reason why the devil so exceedingly opposes the conversion of sinners.*—It is because if they are once converted, they are for ever converted, and thus for ever put beyond his reach, so that he can never

overthrow and ruin them. If there was such a thing as falling from grace, doubtless the devil would even then oppose our having grace; but more especially does he oppose it, since he knows that if once we have it, he can never expect to overthrow it, but that we, by its very possession, are finally lost to him, and for ever out of the reach of his destroying power. This may show us something of the reason of that violent opposition that persons who are under awakenings and convictions, and who are seeking conversion, meet with through the many and great temptations they are assailed with by the adversary. He is always active, and greatly bestirs himself for the overthrow of such, and heaps mountains in their way, if possible, to hinder the saving work of the Holy Spirit, and prevent their conversion. He labours to the utmost to quench convictions of sin, and if possible to lead persons that are under them to return to the ways of heedlessness and sloth, in transgression. Sometimes he endeavours to flatter, and at other times to discourage them, labouring to entangle and perplex their minds, and to his utmost stirring up exercises of corruption, suggesting blasphemous thoughts, and leading them to quarrelling with God. By many subtle temptations he endeavours to make them think that it is in vain to seek salvation. He tempts them from the doctrine of God's decrees; or by their own impotence and helplessness; or by telling them that all they do is sin; or by trying to persuade them that their day of grace is past; or by terrifying them with the idea that they have committed the unpardonable sin. Or it may be he tells them that their pains and trouble are needless, and that there is time enough hereafter; or, if possible, he will deceive them with false hopes, and flatter them that they are in a safe estate, while they are still out of Christ. In these, and innumerable other ways, Satan endeavours to hinder the conversion of men, for he knows the truth of the doctrine we have insisted on, that if ever grace be implanted in the soul, he can never overthrow it, and that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Again,

2. *We may see from this subject, that those whose seeming grace fails, and is overthrown, may conclude that they never had any true grace.*—That is not true grace which is like the morning cloud and the early dew, which passeth away. When persons seem for a while to be awakened and terrified, and have more or less of a sense of their sinfulness and vileness, and then afterwards seem much affected with the mercy of God, and appear to find comfort in him, and yet, after all, when the novelty is over, their impressions decline and pass away, so that there is no abiding change in the heart and life, then it is a sign that they have no true grace. There is nothing in the case of such that answers to the declaration of the apostle (2 Cor. v. 17), that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” If the individual, after seeming conversion, turns back from God and Christ and spiritual things, and the heart again goes after vanity and the world, and the known duties of religion

arc neglected, and the person again returns to the ways of sin, and goes on gratifying the selfish or sensual appetites, and leading a carnal and careless life, then all the promise of his apparent conversion is deceptive. It is but like the promise of the blossoms on the trees in the time of spring or early summer, so many of which fall off; and never bring forth fruit. The result proves that all these seeming appearances of grace are only appearances, and that those who trust to them are awfully deluded. The grace that does not hold out and persevere, is not real grace. Once more,

3. *The subject affords matter of great joy and comfort to all who have good evidence that they indeed have true grace in their hearts.*—Those with whom it is thus are possessed of an inestimable jewel, which is worth more than all the jewels and precious stones, and all the crowns and costly treasures, in the universe. And this may be a matter of great comfort to them, that they never shall lose this jewel, but that he that gave it will keep it for them; and that, as he has brought them into a most happy state, so he will uphold them in it; and that his mighty power, by which he is able to subdue all things to himself, is on their side, and pledged for their protection, so that none of their enemies shall be able to destroy them. They may rejoice that they have a strong city, unto which God has appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks. And whatever bitterness their enemies manifest against them, and however subtle and violent they may be in their attacks upon them, they may still stand on high, on their munitions of rocks on which God has set them, and laugh their foes to scorn, and glory in the Most High as their sure refuge and defence. The everlasting arms are underneath them. Jehovah, who rides upon the heavens, is their help. And all their foes he will subdue under his feet; so that they may well rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the rock of their salvation. Finally,

4. *The subject also affords matter of great encouragement to the saints in carrying on the warfare against the enemies of their souls.*—It is the greatest of all disadvantages to a soldier to have to go forth to battle without the hope of being able to conquer, but with the prevailing expectation of being overcome. As hope in the one case might be half the victory, so despondency in the other would be likely to insure defeat. The latter would debilitate and weaken, while the former would co-operate with and increase strength. You that have good evidence that you have grace in your hearts, have, then, all that you can need to encourage you. The Captain of your salvation will assuredly conduct you to victory in the end. He who is able to uphold you has promised that you shall overcome, and his promise shall never fail. Resting on that promise, be faithful to your part, and ere long the song of victory shall be yours, and the crown of victory he will place, with his own hands, upon your head.