

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 XV.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR EVER TO BE COMMUNICATED TO THE SAINTS, IN THE GRACE OF CHARITY, OR DIVINE LOVE.

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”—1 Cor. xiii. 8.

IN the entire context, the drift of the apostle is, to show the superiority of charity over all the other graces of the Spirit. And in this chapter he sets forth its excellence by three things: *first*, by showing that it is the most essential thing, and that all other gifts are nothing without it; *second*, by showing that from it all good dispositions and behaviour do arise; and, *third*, by showing that it is the most durable of all gifts, and shall remain when the church of God shall be in its most perfect state, and when the other gifts of the Spirit shall have vanished away. And in the text may be observed two things:—

*First*, That one property of charity, by which its excellence is set forth, is, that it is unfailling and everlasting—“Charity never faileth.” This naturally follows the last words of the preceding verse, that “charity endureth all things.” There the apostle declares the durability of charity, as it appears in its withstanding the shock of all the opposition that can be made against it in the world. And now he proceeds further, and declares that charity not only endures to the end of *time*, but also throughout *eternity*—“Charity never faileth.” When all temporal things shall have failed, this shall still abide, and abide for ever. We may also observe in the text,

*Second*, That herein charity is distinguished from all the other gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy, and the gift of tongues, and the gift of knowledge, &c. “Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away;” but “charity never faileth.” By the knowledge here spoken of, is not meant spiritual and divine knowledge in general; for surely there will be such knowledge hereafter in heaven, as well as now on earth, and vastly more than there is on earth, as the apostle expressly declares in the following verses. The knowledge that Christians have of God, and Christ, and spiritual things, and in fact all their *knowledge*, as that word is commonly understood, shall not vanish away, but shall be gloriously increased and perfected in heaven, which is a world of light as well as love. But by the knowledge which the apostle says shall vanish away, is meant a particular miraculous gift that was in the church of God in those days. For the apostle, as we have seen, is here comparing charity with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit—those extraordinary gifts which were common in the church in those days,

one of which was the gift of prophecy, and another the gift of tongues, or the power of speaking in languages that had never been learned. Both these gifts are mentioned in the text; and the apostle says they shall fail and cease. And another gift was the gift of knowledge, or the *word* of knowledge, as it is called in the eighth verse of the previous chapter, where it is so spoken of as to show that it was a different thing, both from that speculative knowledge which is obtained from reason and study, and also from that spiritual or divine knowledge that comes from the saving influence of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It was a particular gift of the Spirit with which some persons were endowed, whereby they were enabled by immediate inspiration to understand mysteries, or the mysterious prophecies and types of the Scriptures, which the apostle speaks of in the second verse of this chapter, saying, “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge,” &c. It is this miraculous gift which the apostle here says shall vanish away, together with the other miraculous gifts of which he speaks, such as prophecy, and the gift of tongues, &c. All these were extraordinary gifts bestowed for a season for the introduction and establishment of Christianity in the world, and when this their end was gained, they were all to fail and cease. But charity was never to cease. Thus the apostle plainly teaches, as the doctrine of the text:

THAT 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 CHARITY, OR DIVINE LOVE.

That the meaning and truth of this doctrine may be better understood, I would speak to it in the four following propositions: *first*, The Spirit of Christ will be everlastingly given to his Church and people, to influence and dwell in them; *second*, There are other fruits of the Spirit besides divine love, wherein the Spirit of God is communicated to his church; *third*, These other fruits are but for a season, and either have already, or will at some time, *cease*; *fourth*, That charity, or divine love, is that great and unfailling fruit of the Spirit, in which his everlasting influence and indwelling in the saints, or in his church, shall appear.

I. *The Spirit of Christ is given to his church and people everlastingly, to influence and dwell in them.*—The Holy Spirit is the great purchase, or purchased gift, of Christ. The chief and sum of all the good things in this life and in the life to come, that are purchased for the church, is the Holy Spirit. And as he is the great purchase, so he is the great promise, or the great thing promised by God and Christ to the church; as said the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 32, 33)—“This Jesus, . . . being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” And this great

purchase and promise of Christ is for ever to be 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. And that it may be preserved, he has given his Holy Spirit to every true member of it, and promised the continuance of that Spirit for ever. His own language is (John xiv. 16, 17), “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

Man, in his first estate in Eden, had the Holy Spirit; but he lost it by his disobedience. But a way has been provided by which it may be restored, and now it is given a second time, never more to depart from the saints. The Spirit of God is so given to his own people as to become truly theirs. It was, indeed, given to our first parents in their state of innocence, and dwelt with them, but not in the same sense in which it is given to, and dwells in, believers in Christ. They had no proper right or sure title to the Spirit, and it was not finally and for ever given to them, as it is to believers in Christ; for if it had been, they never would have lost it. But the Spirit of Christ is not only communicated to those that are converted, but he is made over to them by a sure covenant, so that he is become their own. Christ is become theirs, and therefore his fulness is theirs, and therefore his Spirit is theirs—their purchased, and promised, and sure possession. But,

II. *There are other fruits of the Spirit besides that which summarily consists in charity, or divine love, wherein the Spirit of God is communicated to his church.* For example,

1. *The Spirit of God has been communicated to his church in extraordinary gifts, such as the gift of miracles, the gift of inspiration, &c.*—The Spirit of God seems to have been communicated to the church in such gifts, formerly to the prophets under the Old Testament, and to the apostles, and evangelists, and prophets, and to the generality of the early ministers of the gospel, and also to multitudes of common Christians, under the New Testament. To them were given such gifts as the gift of prophecy, and the gift of tongues, and the gift called the gift of knowledge, and others mentioned in the context, and in the foregoing chapter. And besides these,

2. *There are the common and ordinary gifts of the Spirit of God.*—These, in all ages, have more or less been bestowed on many natural, unconverted men, in common convictions of sin, and common illuminations, and common religious affections, which, though they have nothing in them of the nature of divine love, or of true and saving grace, are yet the fruits of the Spirit, in the sense that they are the effect of his influences on the hearts of men. And as to faith and hope, if there be nothing of divine love with them, there can be no more of the Spirit of God in them than is common to natural

unregenerate men. This is clearly implied by the apostle, when he says in this chapter, “Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” All saving faith and hope have love in them as ingredients, and as their essence; and if this ingredient be taken out, there is nothing left but the body without the spirit. It is nothing saving; but at best, only a common fruit of the Spirit. But,

III. *All these other fruits of the Spirit are but for a season, and either have already ceased, or at some time will cease.*—As to the miraculous gifts of prophecy and tongues, &c., they are but of a temporary use, and cannot be continued in heaven. They were given only as an extraordinary means of grace that God was once pleased to grant to his church in the world. But when the saints that once enjoyed the use of these means went to heaven, such means of grace ceased, for they were no longer needful. There is no occasion for any means of grace in heaven, whether ordinary, such as the stated and common means of God’s house, or extraordinary, such as the gifts of tongues, and of knowledge, and of prophecy. I say, there is no occasion for any of these means of grace to be continued in heaven, because there the end of all means of grace is already fully obtained in the perfect sanctification and happiness of God’s people. The apostle, speaking in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, of the various means of grace, says that they are given “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.” But when this has come to pass, and the saints are perfected, and are already come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, then there will be no further occasion for any of these means, whether ordinary or extraordinary. It is in this respect very much as it is with the fruits of the field, which stand in need of tillage, and rain, and sunshine, till they are ripe and gathered in, and then they need them no more.

And as these miraculous gifts of the Spirit were but temporary with regard to those particular persons that enjoyed them, so they are but for a season with regard to the church of God taken as a collective body. These gifts are not fruits of the Spirit that were given to be continued to the church throughout all ages. They were continued in the church, or at least were granted from time to time, though not without some considerable intermissions, from the beginning of the world till the canon of the Scriptures was completed. They were bestowed on the church before the beginning of the sacred canon, that is, before the book of Job and the five books of Moses were written. People had the word of God then in another way, viz. by immediate revelation from time to time given to eminent persons, who were, as it were, fathers in the church of God, and this revelation handed down from them to others by oral tradition. It was a very common thing then, for

the Spirit of God to communicate himself in dreams and visions, as appears by several passages in the book of Job. They had extraordinary gifts of the Spirit before the flood. God immediately and miraculously revealed himself to Adam and Eve, and so to Abel, and to Enoch, who, we are informed (Jude 14), had the gift of prophecy. And so Noah had immediate revelations made to him, and he warned the old world from God; and Christ, by his Spirit speaking through him, went and preached to the spirits that are now in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited while the ark was preparing (1 Pet. iii. 19, 20). And so Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were favoured with immediate revelations; and Joseph had extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and so had Job and his friends. From this time, there seems to have been an intermission of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit until the time of Moses; and from his time they were continued in a succession of prophets, that was kept up, though not again without some interruptions, till the time of Malachi. After that, there seems to have been a long intermission of several hundred years, till the dawn of the gospel day, when the Spirit began again to be given in his extraordinary gifts, as to Anna, and Simeon, and Zacharias, and Elizabeth, and Mary, and Joseph, and John the Baptist.

These communications of the Spirit were given to make way for him who hath the Spirit without measure, the great prophet of God, by whom the Spirit is communicated to all other prophets. And in the days of his flesh, his disciples had a measure of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, being enabled thus to teach and to work miracles. But after the resurrection and ascension, was the most full and remarkable effusion of the Spirit in his miraculous gifts that ever took place, beginning with the day of Pentecost, after Christ had risen and ascended to heaven. And in consequence of this, not only here and there an extraordinary person was endowed with these extraordinary gifts, but they were common in the church, and so continued during the lifetime of the apostles, or till the death of the last of them, even the apostle John, which took place about a hundred years from the birth of Christ; so that the first hundred years of the Christian era, or the first century, was the era of miracles. But soon after that, the canon of Scripture being completed when the apostle John had written the book of Revelation, which he wrote not long before his death, these miraculous gifts were no longer continued in the church. For there was now completed an established written revelation of the mind and will of God, wherein God had fully recorded a standing and all-sufficient rule for his church in all ages. And the Jewish church and nation being overthrown, and the Christian church and the last dispensation of the church of God being established, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were no longer needed, and therefore they ceased; for though they had been continued in the church for so many ages, yet then they failed, and

God caused them to fail because there was no further occasion for them. And so was fulfilled the saying of the text, “Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” And now there seems to be an end to all such fruits of the Spirit as these, and we have no reason to expect them any more. And as to those fruits of the Spirit that are common, such as the conviction, illumination, belief, &c., which are common both to the godly and ungodly, these are given in all ages of the church in the world; and yet with respect to the persons that have these common gifts, they will cease when they come to die; and with respect to the church of God considered collectively, they will cease, and there will be no more of them after the day of judgment. I pass, then, to chew, as proposed,

IV. *That charity, or divine love, is that great fruit of the Spirit, that never fails, and in which his continued and everlasting influence and indwelling in his church shall appear and be manifest.*—We have seen that the Spirit of Christ is for ever given to the church of Christ, and given that it may dwell in his saints for ever, in influences that shall never fail. And therefore however many fruits of the Spirit may be but temporary, and have their limits where they fail, yet it must be that there is some way of the Spirit’s influence, and some fruit of that influence, which is unfailing and eternal. And charity, or divine love, is that fruit, in communicating, and nourishing, and exercising which, his unfailing and eternal influences appear. This is a fruit of the Spirit that never fails or ceases in the church of Christ, whether we consider it with respect to its particular members, or regard it as a collective body. And,

1. *We may consider the church of Christ with respect to the particular members of which it consists,* And here it will appear that charity, or Christian love, is an unfailing fruit of the Spirit. Every one of the true members of Christ’s invisible church is possessed of this fruit of the Spirit in the heart. Divine or Christian love is implanted, and dwells, and reigns there, as an everlasting fruit of the Spirit, and one that never fails. It never fails in this world, but remains through all trials and oppositions, for the apostle tells us (Rom. viii. 38, 39) that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And it ceases not when the saints come to die. When the apostles and others of their day died and went to heaven, they left all their miraculous gifts behind them with their bodies. But they did not leave the love that was in their hearts behind them, but carried that with them to heaven, where it was gloriously perfected. Though when wicked men die, who have had the common influences of the Spirit, their gifts shall eternally cease, yet death never overthrows Christian love, that great fruit of the Spirit, in any that have it. They that have it, may and shall leave behind them many other fruits of the Spirit which they had in

common with wicked men. And though they shall leave all that was common in their faith, and hope, and all that did not pertain to this divine and holy love, yet this love they shall not leave behind, but it shall go with them to eternity, and shall be perfected there, and shall live and reign with perfect and glorious dominion in their souls for ever and ever. And so, again,

2. *We may consider the church of Christ collectively, or as a body.*—And here, again, it will appear that charity, or Christian love, shall never fail. Though other fruits of the Spirit fail in it, this shall never fail. Of old, when there were interruptions of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in the church, and when there were seasons in which no prophet or inspired person appeared that was possessed of such gifts, still there never was any total interruption of this excellent fruit or influence of the Spirit. Miraculous gifts were intermitted through the long time extending from Malachi to near the birth of Christ; but in all this time, the influence of the Spirit, in keeping up divine love in the church, was never suspended. As God always had a church of saints in the world, from the first creation of the church after the fall, so this influence and fruit of his Spirit never failed in it. And when, after the completion of the canon of the Scriptures, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit seemed finally to have ceased and failed in the church, this influence of the Spirit in causing divine love in the hearts of his saints did not cease, but has been kept up through all ages from that time to this, and so will be to the end of the world. And at the end of the world, when the church of Christ shall be settled in its last, and most complete, and its eternal state, and all common gifts, such as convictions and illuminations, and all miraculous gifts, shall be eternally at an end, yet then divine love shall not fail, but shall be brought to its most glorious perfection in every individual member of the ransomed church above. Then, in every heart, that love which now seems as but a spark, shall be kindled to a bright and glowing flame, and every ransomed soul shall be as it were in a blaze of divine and holy love, and shall remain and grow in this glorious perfection and blessedness through all eternity!

I shall give but a single reason for the truth of the doctrine which has thus been presented. And the great reason why it is so, that other fruits of the Spirit fail, and the great fruit of love remains, is, that *love is the great end of all the other fruits and gifts of the Spirit*. The principle and the exercises of divine love in the heart, and the fruits of it in the conduct, and the happiness that consists in and flows from it—these things are the great end of all the fruits of the Spirit that fail. Charity or divine love is the end, to which all the inspiration, and all the miraculous gifts that ever were in the world, are but the means. They were only *means* of grace, but charity or divine love is *grace itself*; and not only so, but the sum of all grace. Revelation and miracles were never given for any other end but only to promote holiness, and



build up the kingdom of Christ in men's hearts; but Christian love is the sum of all holiness, and its growth is but the growth of Christ's kingdom in the soul. The extraordinary fruits of the Spirit were given for revealing and confirming the word and will of God, that men by believing might be conformed to that will: and they were valuable and good only so far as they tended to this end. And hence when that end was obtained, and when the canon of the Scriptures, the great and powerful means of grace, was completed, and the ordinances of the New Testament and of the last dispensation were fully established, the extraordinary gifts ceased, and came to an end, as being no further useful. Miraculous gifts being a means to a further end, they are good no further than as they tend to that end. But divine love is that end itself, and therefore remains when the means to it cease. The end is not only a good, but the highest kind of good in itself, and therefore remains for ever. So it is with respect to the common gifts of the Spirit that are given in all ages, such as illumination, conviction, &c. They have no good in themselves, and are no further good than as they tend to promote that grace and holiness which radically and summarily consist in divine love; and therefore when this end is once fully answered, there shall be an end for ever of these common gifts, while divine love, which is the end of them all, shall eternally remain.

In the application of this subject, I would remark,

1. *That there seems to be no reason to think, as some have thought, that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are to be restored to the church in the future and glorious times of her latter-day prosperity and blessedness.*— Many divines have been of the opinion, that when the latter-day glory of the church, which is spoken of in the Word of God, shall come, there will again be prophets, and men endowed with the gifts of tongues and of working miracles, as was the case in the times of the apostles; and some now living seem to be of the same mind.

But from what the apostle says in the text and context, it seems as though we had no reason to imagine any such thing from what the Scriptures say of the gloriousness of those times, or because it speaks of the state of the church then as being more glorious than ever before, and as though the Spirit of God would then be poured out in more abundant measure than ever in times past. All these things may be, and yet there be no such extraordinary gifts bestowed on the church. When the Spirit of God is poured out for the purpose of producing and promoting divine love, he is poured out in a more excellent way than when he is manifested in miraculous gifts. This the apostle expressly teaches in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, where, after enumerating many miraculous gifts, he advises Christians to covet or desire the best of them, but then adds, "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way," namely, to seek the influence of the Spirit of God, working charity or

divine love in the heart. Surely the Scriptures, when speaking of the future glorious state of the church as being such an excellent state, give us no reason to conclude that the Spirit of God will be poured out then in any other way than in the most excellent way. And doubtless the most excellent way of the Spirit is for the most excellent state of the church.

The future state of the church being so much more perfect than in previous times, does not tend to prove that then there shall be miraculous gifts, but rather the contrary. For the apostle himself, in the text and context, speaks of these extraordinary gifts ceasing and vanishing away to give place for a kind of fruits or influences of the Spirit that are more perfect. If you do but read the text in connexion with the two following verses, you will see that the reason implied why prophecy and tongues fail, and charity remains, is this, that the imperfect gives way to the perfect, and the less excellent to the more excellent; and the more excellent, he declares, is charity or love. Prophecy and miracles argue the imperfection of the state of the church, rather than its perfection. For they are means designed by God as a stay or support, or as a leading-string, if I may so say, to the church in its infancy, rather than as means adapted to it in its full growth; and as such the apostle seems to speak of them. When the Christian church first began, after the ascension of Christ, it was in its infancy, and then it needed miracles, &c., to establish it; but, being once established, and the canon of the Scriptures being completed, they ceased, which, according to the apostle's arguing, shows their imperfection, and how much inferior they are to that fruit or influence of the Holy Spirit which is seen in divine love. Why, then, should we expect that they should be restored again when the church is in its most perfect state? All these miraculous gifts the apostle seems to call "childish things," in comparison with the nobler fruit of Christian love. They are adapted to the childish state of the church, while holy love is more to be expected in its full-grown and manly state; and in themselves they are childish, in comparison with that holy love which will so abound in the church when it comes to its perfect stature in Christ Jesus.

Nor is the gloriousness of the future times of the church any argument for the continuance, in those times, of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. For surely the state of the church then will not be more glorious than the heavenly state; and yet the apostle teaches, that in the heavenly state all these gifts shall be at an end, and the influence of the Spirit in producing divine love only shall remain. Nor does it appear that there shall be any need of miraculous gifts in order to the bringing about of the future glorious times of the church; for God is able to bring them about without the instrumentality of these gifts. If the Spirit of God be poured out in only his gracious influences in converting souls, and in kindling divine love in them in such measure as he may and will, this will be enough, without new revelations or mir-

acles, to produce all the effects that need to be produced in order to the bringing in of the glorious times of which we are speaking; as we may all be convinced by the little we have seen in the late outpouring of the Spirit in this and the neighbouring towns. If we needed any new rule to go by, and the common influences of the Spirit, together with the Word of God, were insufficient, then there might be some necessity for restoring miracles. But there is no need whatever of new Scriptures being given, or of any additions being made to those we have, for they are in themselves a perfect rule for our faith and practice; and as there is no need of a new canon of Scripture, so there is no need of those miraculous gifts, the great object of which was, either to confirm the Scriptures, or to make up for the want of them when as yet they had not been given by the inspiring Spirit.

2. *The subject we have been considering should make persons exceedingly cautious how they give heed to anything that may look like a new revelation, or that may claim to be any extraordinary gift of the Spirit.*— Sometimes a person may have an impression in his mind as to something that he thinks immediately revealed to him that is to come to pass concerning himself or some of his relatives or friends; or as to something that is to come to pass that before was hid from him, and if it had not been revealed, would remain still a secret; or, perhaps, he thinks it has been revealed to him, what is the spiritual state of some other person, or of his own soul, in some other way than by the scriptural marks and evidences of grace in the heart. Sometimes persons imagine that they have an immediate direction from heaven to go and do this, or that, or the other thing, by impressions immediately made on their minds, or in some other way than by learning from Scripture or reason that it is their duty. And sometimes they fancy that God immediately reveals to them by a dream, what the future shall be. But all these things, if they were from God's Spirit, would be of the nature of those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which the apostle says do cease and are done away, and which, having long since failed, there is no reason to suppose that God will restore again. And if they are not from God's Spirit, they are but gross delusions. And once more,

3. *The subject teaches how greatly we should value those influences and fruits of the Spirit which are evidences of true grace in the soul, and which are all summarily included in charity, or divine love.*— This is the end and design of the apostle in the text and context, to teach us to value this charity or love, by showing that it never fails, though all the miraculous gifts of the Spirit do fail and come to an end. This grace is the most excellent fruit of the Spirit, without which the most extraordinary and miraculous gifts are nothing. This is the great *end* to which they are but the *means*; and which is, of course, more excellent than all these means. Let us all, therefore, earnestly seek this blessed fruit of the Spirit, and let us seek that it may abound in

our souls; 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.

Thus we shall possess the richest of all treasures, and the highest and most excellent of all graces. Having within us that love which is immortal in its nature, we shall have the surest evidence that our immortality will be blessed, and that our hope of eternal life is that good hope which shall never disappoint us. Love cherished in the soul on earth, will be to us the foretaste of, and the preparation for, that world which is a world of love, and where the Spirit of love reigns and blesses for ever.