

## LECTURE I

### CHARITY, OR LOVE, THE SUM OF ALL VIRTUE

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountain; and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

IN these words we observe — *First*, that something is spoken of as of special importance, and as peculiarly essential in Christians, which the apostle calls CHARITY. And this charity, we find, is abundantly insisted on in the New Testament by Christ and his apostles, — more insisted on, indeed, than any other virtue.

But, then, the word “charity,” as used in the New Testament, is of much more extensive signification than as it is used generally in common discourse. What persons very often mean by “charity,” in their ordinary conversation, is a disposition to hope and think the best of others, and to put a good construction on their words and behavior; and sometimes the word is used for a disposition to give to the poor. But these things are only certain particular branches, or fruits of that great virtue of charity which is so much insisted on throughout the New Testament. The word properly signifies *love*, or *that disposition or affection whereby one is dear to another*, and the original ἀγάπη, which is here translated “charity,” might better have been rendered “love,” for that is the proper English of it: so that by charity, in the New Testament, is meant the very same thing as Christian love. Though it be more frequently used for love to men, yet sometimes it is used to signify not only love to men, but love to God. So it is manifestly used by the apostle in this Epistle, as he explains himself in chapter 8:1— “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth,” etc.

Here the comparison is between knowledge and charity — and the preference is given to charity, because knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And then, in the next two verses, it is more particularly explained how knowledge usually puffs up, and why charity edifieth. So that what is called *charity* in the first verse, is called *loving God* in the third, for the very same thing is evidently spoken of in the two places. And doubtless the apostle means the same thing by charity in this thirteenth chapter, that he does in the eighth, for he is here comparing the same two things together that he was there, viz. knowledge and charity. “Though I have all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing;” and again, “charity never faileth, but knowledge, it shall vanish away.” So

that by *charity* here, we are doubtless to understand *Christian love* in its full extent, and whether it be exercised towards God or our fellow creatures.

And this charity is here spoken of as that which is, in a distinguishing manner, the great and essential thing, which will appear more fully when we observe:

*Secondly*, what things are mentioned as being in vain without it, viz. the most excellent things that ever belong to natural men, the most excellent privileges, and the most excellent performances. *First*, [there are] the most excellent privileges, such as preaching with tongues, the gift of prophecy, understanding all mysteries, faith to remove mountains, etc. And *secondly*, [there are] the most excellent performances, such as giving all one's goods to feed the poor, and the body to be burned, etc. Greater things than these, no natural man ever had or did, and they are the kind of things in which men are exceedingly prone to trust. Yet the apostle declares that if we have them all, and have not charity, we are nothing. The doctrine taught, then, is this:

THAT ALL THE VIRTUE THAT IS SAVING, AND THAT DISTINGUISHES TRUE

CHRISTIANS FROM OTHERS, IS SUMMED UP IN CHRISTIAN LOVE. This appears from the

words of the text, because so many other things are mentioned that natural men may have, and the things mentioned are of the highest kind it is possible they should have, both of privilege and performance, and yet it is said they all avail nothing without this. Whereas, if any of them were saving, they would avail something without it.

And by the apostle's mentioning so many and so high things, and then saying of them all, that they profited nothing without charity, we may justly conclude, that there is nothing at all that avails anything without it. Let a man have what he will, and do what he will, it signifies nothing without charity, which surely implies that charity is the great thing, and that everything which has not charity in some way contained or implied in it, is nothing. And that this charity is the life and soul of all religion, without which all things that wear the name of virtues are empty and vain. In speaking to this doctrine, I would first notice the nature of this divine love, and then show the truth of the doctrine respecting it. And

I. *I would speak of the nature of a truly Christian love.* And here I would observe,

1. *That all true Christian love is one and the same in its principle.* It may be various in its forms and objects, and may be exercised either toward God or men, but it is the same principle in the heart that is the foundation of every exercise of a truly Christian love, whatever may be its object. It is not with the holy love in the heart of the Christian, as it is with the love of other men. Their love toward different objects, may be from different principles and motives, and with different views, but a truly Christian love is different from this. It is one as to its principle, whatever the object about which it is exercised. It is from the same spring or fountain in the heart, though it may flow out in

different channels and diverse directions, and therefore it is all fitly comprehended in the one name of charity, as in the text. That this Christian love is one, whatever the objects toward which it may flow forth, appears by the following things: —

*First*, it is all *from the same Spirit* influencing the heart. It is from the breathing of the same Spirit that true Christian love arises, both toward God and man. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of love, and when the former enters the soul, love also enters with it. God is love, and he that has God dwelling in him by his Spirit, will have love dwelling in him also. The nature of the Holy Spirit is love, and it is by communicating himself, in his own nature, to the saints, that their hearts are filled with divine charity. Hence we find that the saints are partakers of the divine nature, and Christian love is called the “love of the Spirit” (Rom. 15:30), and “love in the Spirit” (Col. 1:8), and the very bowels of love and mercy seem to signify the same thing with the fellowship of the Spirit (Phil. 2:1). It is that Spirit, too, that infuses love to God (Rom. 5:5); and it is by the indwelling of that Spirit, that the soul abides in love to God and man (1 John 3:23, 24; 4:12, 13). And,

*Second*, Christian love, both to God and man, is *wrought in the heart by the same work of the Spirit*. There are not two works of the Spirit of God, one to infuse a spirit of love to God, and the other to infuse a spirit of love to men, but in producing one, the Spirit produces the other also. In the work of conversion, the Holy Spirit renews the heart by giving it a divine temper (Eph. 4:23), and it is one and the same divine temper thus wrought in the heart, that flows out in love both to God and man. And,

*Third*, when God and man are loved with a truly Christian love, they are both loved *from the same motives*. When God is loved aright, he is loved for his excellency, and the beauty of his nature, especially the holiness of his nature, and it is from the same motive that the saints are loved for holiness’ sake. And all things that are loved with a truly holy love, are loved from the same respect to God. Love to God is the foundation of gracious love to men, and men are loved, either because they are in some respect like God, in the possession of his nature and spiritual image, or because of the relation they stand in to him as his children or creatures as those who are blessed of him, or to whom his mercy is offered, or in some other way from regard to him. Only remarking, that though Christian love be one in its principle, yet it is distinguished and variously denominated in two ways, with respect to its objects, and the kinds of its exercise; as, for example, its degrees, etc. I now proceed,

II. *To show the truth of the doctrine, that all virtue that is saving, or distinguishing of true Christians, is summed up in Christian love.* And,

1. *We may argue this from what reason teaches of the nature of love.* And if we duly consider its nature, two things will appear —

*First*, that love will *dispose to all proper acts of respect to both God and man*. This is evident, because a true respect to either God or man *consists* in love. If a man sincerely loves God, it will dispose him to render all proper respect to him, and men

need no other incitement to show each other all the respect that is due, than love. Love to God will dispose a man to honor him, to worship and adore him, and heartily to acknowledge his greatness and glory and dominion. And so it will dispose to all acts of obedience to God. For the servant that loves his master, and the subject that loves his sovereign, will be disposed to proper subjection and obedience. Love will dispose the Christian to behave toward God, as a child to a father: amid difficulties, to resort to him for help, and put all his trust in him, just as it is natural for us, in case of need or affliction, to go to one that we love for pity and help. It will lead us, too, to give credit to his Word, and to put confidence in him, for we are not apt to suspect the veracity of those we have entire friendship for. It will dispose us to praise God for the mercies we receive from him, just as we are disposed to gratitude for any kindness we receive from our fellowmen that we love. Love, again, will dispose our hearts to submission to the will of God, for we are more willing that the will of those we love should be done, than of others. We naturally desire that those we love should be suited, and that we should be agreeable to them, and true affection and love to God will dispose the heart to acknowledge God's right to govern, and that he is worthy to do it, and so will dispose to submission. Love to God will dispose us to walk humbly with him, for he that loves God will be disposed to acknowledge the vast distance between God and himself. It will be agreeable to such an one, to exalt God, and set him on high above all, and to lie low before him. A true Christian delights to have God exalted on his own abasement, because he loves him. He is willing to own that God is worthy of this, and it is with delight that he casts himself in the dust before the Most High, from his sincere love to him.

And so a due consideration of the nature of love will show that it disposes men to all duties towards their neighbors. If men have a sincere love to their neighbors, it will dispose them to all acts of justice towards those neighbors — for real love and friendship always dispose us to give those we love their due, and never to wrong them (Rom. 13:10) — “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.” And the same love will dispose to truth toward neighbors, and will tend to prevent all lying and fraud and deceit. Men are not disposed to exercise fraud and treachery toward those they love, for thus to treat men is to treat them like enemies, but love destroys enmity. Thus the apostle makes use the oneness that there ought to be among Christians, as an argument to induce them to truth between man and man (Eph. 4:25). Love will dispose to walk humbly amongst men; for a real and true love will incline us to high thoughts of others, and to think them better than ourselves. It will dispose men to honor one another, for all are naturally inclined to think highly of those they love, and to give them honor, so that by love are fulfilled those precepts, 1 Pet. 11:17 — “Honour all men,” and Phil. 2:3 — “Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” Love will dispose to contentment the sphere in which God hath placed us, without coveting any things that our neighbor possesses, or envying him on account of

## LECTURE II

### CHARITY MORE EXCELLENT THAN THE EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 13:1, 2

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

HAVING in the last lecture shown, that all the virtue in the saints which is distinguishing and saving may be summed up in Christian love, I would now consider what things are compared with it in the text, and to which of the two the preference is given.

The things compared together, in the text, are of two kinds: on the one hand, the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Spirit, such as the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, etc., which were frequent in that age, and particularly in the church at Corinth; and on the other hand, the effect of the ordinary influences of the same Spirit, in true Christians, viz. charity, or divine love.

That was an age of miracles. It was not then, as it had been of old among the Jews, when two or three, or at most a very few in the whole nation, had the gift of prophecy. It rather seemed as if Moses's wish, recorded in Num. 11:29, had become in a great measure fulfilled: "Would to God all the Lord's people were prophets!" Not only some certain persons of great eminence were endowed with such gifts, but they were common to all sorts, old and young, men and women: according to the prophecy of the prophet Joel, who, preaching of those days, foretold beforehand that great event — "And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God), I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." Especially the church at Corinth was very eminent for such gifts. All sorts of miraculous gifts were, as is apparent from this epistle, bestowed on that church, and the number who enjoyed these gifts was not small. "To one," says the apostle, "is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; ...but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." And so some had one gift, and some another. "But," says the apostle, "covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way," *i.e.* something more excellent than all these gifts put together, yea, something of so

great importance, that all these gifts without it are nothing. For “though I speak with the tongues of men,” as they did on the day of Pentecost, yea, “and of angels” too, “and have not charity, I am become” an empty worthless thing, “as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have” not only one, but all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and can not only speak with tongues, but have “the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge,” to see into all the deep things of God by immediate inspiration; “and though I have all faith” to work all sorts of miracles, yea, even “so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” Charity, then, which is the fruit of the ordinary sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, is preferred, as being more excellent than any, yea, than all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; even Christian love, which, as has been shown, is the sum of all saving grace. Yea, so very much is it preferred, that all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, without it, are nothing, and can profit nothing.

The doctrine taught, then, is — THAT THE ORDINARY INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, WORKING THE GRACE OF CHARITY IN THE HEART, IS A MORE EXCELLENT BLESSING THAN ANY OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT. Here I would endeavor to show, *first*, what is meant by the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; *secondly*, that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are indeed great privileges; and yet, *thirdly*, that the ordinary influence of the Spirit, working the grace of charity or love in the heart, is a more excellent blessing.

I. *I would briefly explain what is meant by the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit*, for the gifts and operations of the Spirit of God are, by divines, distinguished into *common* and *saving*, and into *ordinary* and *extraordinary*.

1. The gifts and operations of the Spirit of God are distinguished into those that are *common*, and those that are *saving*. By common gifts of the Spirit are meant such as are common both to the godly and the ungodly. There are certain ways in which the Spirit of God influences the minds of natural men, as well as the minds of the godly. Thus there are common convictions of sin, *i.e.* such convictions as ungodly men may have as well as godly. So there are common illuminations or enlightenings, *i.e.* such as are common to both godly and ungodly. So there are common religious affections — common gratitude — common sorrow, and the like. But there are other gifts of the Spirit, which are peculiar to the godly, such as saving faith and love, and all the other saving graces of the Spirit.

2. *Ordinary and extraordinary.* — The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as the gift of tongues, of miracles, of prophecy, etc., are called extraordinary, because they are such as are not given in the ordinary course of God’s providence. They are not bestowed in the way of God’s ordinary providential dealing with his children, but only on extraordinary occasions, as they were bestowed on the prophets and apostles to enable them to reveal the mind and will of God before the canon of Scripture was complete, and so on the primitive Church, in order to the founding and establishing of it in the world.

But since the canon of the Scripture has been completed, and the Christian Church fully founded and established, these extraordinary gifts have ceased. But the ordinary gifts of the Spirit are such as are continued to the Church of God throughout all ages: such gifts as are granted in conviction and conversion, and such as appertain to the building up of the saints in holiness and comfort.

It may be observed, then, that the distinction of the gifts of the Spirit into ordinary and extraordinary, is very different from the other distinction into common and special. For some of the ordinary gifts, such as faith, hope, charity, are not common gifts. They are such gifts as God ordinarily bestows on his Church in all ages, but they are not common to the godly and the ungodly: they are peculiar to the godly. And the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are common gifts. The gifts of tongues, of miracles, of prophecy, etc., although they are not ordinarily bestowed on the Christian Church, but only on extraordinary occasions, yet are not peculiar to the godly, for many ungodly men have had these gifts (Mat. 7:22, 23) — “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Having explained these terms, I proceed to show

II. *That the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God are indeed great privileges.* — When God endows anyone with a spirit of prophecy, favors him with immediate inspiration, or gives him power to work miracles, to heal the sick, to cast out devils, and the like, the privilege is great; yea, this is one of the highest kind of privileges that God ever bestows on men, next to saving grace. It is a great privilege to live in the enjoyment of the outward means of grace, and to belong to the visible Church, but to be a prophet and a worker of miracles in the Church is a much greater privilege still. It is a great privilege to hear the Word which has been spoken by prophets and inspired persons, but a much greater to be a prophet, to preach the Word, to be inspired by God to make known his mind and will to others. It was a great privilege that God bestowed on Moses when he called him to be a prophet, and employed him as an instrument to reveal the law to the children of Israel, and to deliver to the church so great a part of the written Word of God, even the first written revelation that ever was delivered to it, and when he used him as an instrument of working so many wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. Great was the privilege that God bestowed on David, in inspiring him, and making him the penman of so great and excellent a part of his Word, for the use of the Church in all ages. Great was the privilege that God bestowed on those two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, in enabling them to perform such miraculous and wonderful works. And the privilege was very great that God bestowed on the prophet Daniel, in giving him so much of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, particularly such understanding in the visions of God. This procured him great honor among the heathen, and even in the court of the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, that great and mighty and haughty monarch, so admired

Daniel for it, that he was once about to worship him as a god. He fell upon his face before him, and commanded that an oblation and sweet odors should be offered unto him (Dan. 2:46). And Daniel was advanced to greater honor than all the wise men, the magicians, astrologers, and soothsayers of Babylon, in consequence of these extraordinary gifts which God bestowed upon him. Hear how the queen speaks of him to Belshazzar (Dan. 5:11, 12) — “There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father, light and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel.” This privilege was also the thing which gave Daniel honor in the Persian court (Dan. 6:1-3) — “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first; that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.” By this excellent spirit was doubtless, among other things, meant the spirit of prophecy and divine inspiration, for which he had been so honored by the princes of Babylon.

It was a great privilege that Christ bestowed on the apostles, in so filling them with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, inspiring them to teach all nations, and making them as it were next to himself, and to be the twelve precious stones, that are considered as the twelve foundations of the Church (Rev. 21:14) — “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb;” (Eph. 2:20) — “Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” And how highly was the apostle John favored, when he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day,” and had such extraordinary visions, representing the great events of God’s providence towards the Church, in all ages of it, to the end of the world.

Such extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are spoken of in Scripture as very great privileges. So was the privilege that God bestowed on Moses in speaking to him by way of extraordinary miraculous revelation, as it were, “face to face.” And that outpouring of the Spirit in his extraordinary gifts on the day of Pentecost, which was foretold and spoken of by the prophet Joel as a very great privilege, in those fore-cited words in Joel 2:28, 29. And Christ speaks of the gifts of miracles and of tongues, as great privileges that he would bestow on them that should believe in him (Mark 16:17, 18).

Such extraordinary gifts of the Spirit have been looked upon as a great honor. Moses and Aaron were envied in the camp because of the peculiar honor that God put upon them (Psa. 106:16). And so Joshua was ready to envy Eldad and Medad because they prophesied in the camp (Num. 11:27). And when the angels themselves have been sent to