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# DIVINE CHARITY.

AN ASSOCIATION SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

*Charleston Baptist Association*

AT THE HIGH HILLS OF SANTEE, S. C.

*November 2, 1812.*

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# DIVINE CHARITY.

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1 COR. xiii. 13.

*And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.*

THE Apostle, in the words under consideration, presents to our view three of the principal and leading Graces of the Spirit. It appears, however, to have been his design to shew the superiority of the latter to the two former.

In fact, they all appear to be intimately connected: They cannot possibly exist alone; for, in whatever soul faith exists, there also abideth Hope and Charity. They are produced, by the spirit of God, in regeneration, and are cherished and kept alive by his divine influence; yet Faith and Hope shall cease, but Charity, heavenly Charity, shall continue and improve forever.

Our subject is important. It immediately respects the people of God. Faith and Hope are their support, while suffering the afflictions of time, and charity, will be their crown of rejoicing in the realms of bliss. Let us, then, my Brethren, with devout attention, consider these several Graces of the spirit, and shew wherein Charity may be said to be the greatest of the three.

May the spirit of God assist us in the attempt and enable us to produce a clear and satisfactory elucidation of the subject.

I.—The first grace of the spirit, which we are to consider, and which takes the lead in the economy of grace, is faith.

By faith we are to understand a belief of the truth upon a spiritual understanding of it. Now it is evident that no natural, or unregenerate man, hath a spiritual understanding; for, says the Apostle Paul, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”—Therefore, he has not this faith; but is as destitute of it as a dead man is of life. It cannot be acquired by human wisdom, however profound it may be; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. In a word, faith is the gift of God. It appears to be communicated by the Holy Ghost to the soul, in the very moment in which it springs out of the death of sin into spiritual life. “And you hath he quickened,” says the Apostle to the Ephesians, “who were dead in trespasses and sins.” As an evidence that faith accompanies this divine quickening, or is produced in the very moment of it, let us adduce a proof or two from the word of God. The penitent thief, just before he expired upon the cross, addressed himself to Jesus, saying, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” This he undoubtedly said by the spirit of God, who enlightened his understanding and wrought faith in him to believe in Christ. The transition, from darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel, appears to have been in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Not long before this happy change he, with the other thief, had reviled the Saviour; for it is said, by St. Matthew, “That the *thieves* also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.”

Another instance we have in the Apostle Paul. He was journeying to Damascus, with enmity in his heart against the disciples of Christ, when he was suddenly arrested by the power of God. Being fallen to the earth he ejaculated this fervent prayer, viz. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” After this it was said respecting him, “Behold he prayeth.” Now we are



assured that no man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. It appears evident that his soul was quickened in that very moment; faith was also wrought in him at the same time, by which he was enabled to receive Christ.

This divine illumination having been produced in the sinner's soul, he now clearly perceives the truth of what the scriptures assert, viz.

I.—That he was conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity.—He is now sensible that his whole nature is contaminated with sin; that from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, he is nothing but wounds, bruises and putrifying sores. He perceives that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; that out of his heart proceed evil and abominable thoughts. Under this view of himself he is made to cry out in the language of the leper of old, "Unclean, unclean."

II.—Having been thus convinced, by the spirit of God, the awakened sinner, is brought "to perceive the purity of the law; that it is holy, just and good; that it requires perfect, personal and perpetual obedience."

From a deep, abiding sense of his own corruptions; of the wanderings of his thoughts and affections; and of the temptations, with which he is continually surrounded, that he is convinced, he cannot fulfil the law. Experience testifies against him that he violates it continually, either in thought, word or deed. The awful penalty of the law is revealed, as the consequence of transgression: "Cursed is every one that continueth not *in all things*, which are written in the book of the law, to do them." From this view of the holy nature of the law, the awakened sinner proceeds to take a view of himself.

III.—He now clearly perceives that he is without strength to redeem himself from the penalty of the law. He is convinced of the insufficiency of his own righteousness to justify him before God. Sin is mixed with all his religious duties. He mourns over his depravity with deep, heart-rending cries and groans; and, in plaintive language, he exclaims, "Oh! wretched

man that I am, who shall deliver me from the curse of the law; for, by its deeds, the scriptures declare, that a sinner cannot be justified in the sight of God? Whither shall I fly from the arrests of divine Justice, or where shall I hide myself from the frowns of that God, who declares that he is angry with the wicked every day?"

The divine spirit, who not only convinces of sin, but who is also the comforter of God's people, now leads him from Sinai to Calvary, and directs him to "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the World."

IV.—The awakened sinner now directs the eye of faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. He beholds him, upon the Cross, satisfying the demands of God's violated law. He hears the Saviour, in the holy triumph of his soul, cry out, "It is finished." He now beholds salvation completely obtained; justice perfectly satisfied; God forever reconciled; and the sinner, through faith in the all-atoning son of God, freely justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. His soul now leaps with joy. He is enabled to extend the hand of faith and lay hold on the divine Saviour, exclaiming, in the language of Thomas, "my Lord and my God." "Wherefore, being justified by *faith*," saith the Apostle, "we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The enmity of the sinner's heart is now slain; the rebellion of his nature subdued, and peace, an abiding peace, with God, is obtained through faith in the gracious and merciful friend of sinners.

This is that faith which purifies the heart; which unites the soul to Christ, and which will, finally, overcome the world. This is the faith of God's elect; the fruit of everlasting love and mercy, and which is freely bestowed without money and without price.

Now, my brethren, this knowledge of himself, of the law, and of Christ, which the sinner possesses, is the genuine effect of his illumination by the Holy Ghost. From the origin and nature of faith, we shall now proceed to consider some of the acts of faith.

I.—Faith is the devout assent of the mind; or the going forth of the soul to the Lord Jesus Christ in earnest desires after the enjoyment of himself. Being united to Jesus Christ, by a living faith, the soul now beholds him as altogether lovely; as possessing every excellency of character; as more to be desired than the possession of the whole world. In comparison of him, all earthly grandeur fades away, like the morning cloud, or early dew, before the bright beams of the rising sun. The language of the devout Psalmist and sweet singer in Israel, now becomes the language of this believing heart, “Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.”

Well did the Apostle, Peter, say “unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious.” Yes, Christ is now precious to the believer in all his characters, relations and offices. In a word, he is the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. If through the medium of faith, Christ appears so glorious, lovely and desirable an object now; how transcendantly glorious; how infinitely lovely and desirable will he appear, when faith shall be consummated!

II.—Another act of faith, is the soul’s fixed trust upon the precious blood of Christ, as the only atonement, propitiation and pacification between God and the guilty sinner. Only by blood divine could stern justice be appeased. The blood of slain beasts, under the law, typified the blood of Christ. Thus, he is called, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” And, saith the Apostle, “without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” And, again, “The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.” On this great atonement faith rests. Propitiation for sin, is rendered complete by the death of Christ; and thus an everlasting peace is effected between a once offended God, and his offending creature, man.

III.—Another act of faith, is the soul’s fixed dependance and hope for justification, before God, upon the righteousness of Christ. Upon this strong and immovable foundation, faith erects the glorious hope of everlasting salvation, which shall be completed in heaven.

where the top stone shall be laid, crying, "grace, grace, unto it."

IV.—Fourthly, and lastly, another act of faith is, the soul's dependence upon the power of Christ, for support, amidst the many labours, trials, and afflictions which it experiences, while passing through the wilderness of this world. The way to Heaven lies through a rough and thorny land, the inhabitants of which are inimical to those who are journeying to a better country.

Believers, therefore, are obliged to contend with them and to resist them stedfastly in the faith. At the head of this host of enemies, stands satan the deceiver of the brethren. He is called the God of this world; the prince of the power of the air, that spirit who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience. From long experience he is skilled in seductive arts and knows when to assail the christian. The next enemy, with respect to power, with whom the christian has to contend, is his own wicked and deceitful heart. Well do the scriptures say, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it." Oh! what sore conflicts does the poor christian have with this enemy within his breast. At times he is almost driven to despair, and is ready to conclude he shall one day fall under the power of his sins. This mournful soliloquy escapes his lips, "Alas! woe is me, for I am undone! surely if I were a christian, if I had ever experienced the power of divine grace renewing my heart, I could not thus be distressed with evil thoughts and corrupt desires! Oh! wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death."

The world with its temptations, is another very powerful enemy. It is in league, with satan to deceive and to destroy the poor believer. Its fascinating riches, honors, pleasures and profits, are directed to the eye and to the heart. Now, if faith did not rest upon the power of Christ while the believer is contending with the world, the flesh and the devil, what would become of him? Would he be able to sustain their united attack and come off more than a conqueror? certainly not. But when the eye of faith is directed towards the Lord Jesus Christ, the great captain of salvation, the

Believer waxes strong and valiant for the fight. Having on the whole armour of God, and following his invincible leader he is enabled to put to flight the combined forces of hell. We may farther add, that it is faith in Christ which supports the child of God under bodily afflictions, losses, crosses and bereavements; which assures him that all things shall work together for his good; and which points him to a bright reversion in the skies.

Let us now proceed to consider some of the effects of faith by which it evidences itself to the world.

I.—Faith having united the soul to Christ, evidences itself by disposing the man to walk in the ways of God, and to delight in his service. Wisdom's ways are now to him ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Christ's service is esteemed perfect freedom; his yoke is easy and his burden light. With alacrity he submits to holy ordinances, not fearing the wrath of men, but esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world, and having respect unto the recompence of the reward.

II.—Faith delights in reading the word of God. This is a casket of jewels in which is found the Pearl of great price. This rich, this invaluable treasure is the free gift of God. Faith therefore prizes it above all the fading riches of the world. Does the miser find pleasure in frequently pouring over his hoards of wealth? Much more does the believer in reading the divine word, and in enumerating its exceeding great and precious promises.

What is his language. "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word. Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." Faith, also, rests upon the promises of the divine word, which are intended to support the believer under all the varied scenes of life; to comfort him under all his afflictions, both temporal and spiritual. These direct his view, beyond the narrow bound of time to the blest mansions of glory, where sin shall cease and sorrows be known no more forever.

“The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away forever.”

III.—Faith also discovereth itself in prayer and communion with God. Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God. It is that familiar and sweet intercourse with heaven which is only enjoyed by the renewed soul. Oh! what divine refreshment does it often afford the christian! It gains him the victory over satan and the world; enlivens his desires after spiritual enjoyments; kindles a flame of love in his heart towards God; opens heaven to his enraptured view; brings him near to the throne of God and associates him with angels and archangels and all the blood-washed multitude, who mingle their hallelujahs in the court of heaven. The pious Cowper, who knew the worth of prayer, could say,

“Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,  
Prayer climbs the Ladder Jacob saw,  
Gives exercise to faith and love,  
Brings every blessing from above.

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight,  
Prayer makes the christian's armour bright;  
And Satan trembles when he sees,  
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

Delight and constancy, in the exercise of this holy duty, demonstrate the reality of faith. Do you desire, my brethren, to see the effects of faith still farther illustrated in the lives of good men? Turn to the christian heroes mentioned in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The apostle there gives you a glowing description of the power and efficacy of this first-born powerful Grace of the Spirit, as displayed in the actions of those illustrious worthies.

Having shewn what true faith is, we shall now proceed to the consideration of the next Grace mentioned in the text, viz.

II.—HOPE. Which may be defined, “expectation; or a firm persuasion of obtaining some future good.” This grace, like her sister, faith, is produced by the spirit



of God in regeneration, and is called, "the hope of the gospel," as it is begotten by means of the gospel. It has an infinitely precious object, an infallible foundation, and a heart purifying influence.

I.—The soul is made to hope for salvation from sin and misery, and for the enjoyment of holiness and happiness. Sin, to the enlightened mind, appears exceeding sinful and distressing. It is an intolerable load, too grievous to be borne. Encouraged by the promises of the gospel, however, deliverance from this galling yoke is hoped for, through Jesus Christ the friend of sinners. To experience holiness and enjoy the happiness which is to be found in nearness to God, are things greatly desired and ardently hoped for by the renewed soul. "Let us," saith the Apostle, "who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the *hope of salvation*: For God hath not appointed us unto wrath; but to *obtain salvation* by our Lord Jesus Christ." This is also a lively hope, as it proceeds from spiritual life and renders the believer lively and active in good works. The Apostle, Peter, corroborated this idea when he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a *lively hope*, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Without this hope our duties would all be performed in a dead, lifeless and formal manner; but this grace gives a spring, an energy to the performance of them. Again, this is a *good hope*, as it has a good foundation, a desirable object and blessed effects. Christ is this good foundation; a foundation which can never fail. Everlasting consolation, thro' him, is the object; and what can be more reviving and enlivening to the soul, than consolation in Christ? The believer's establishment and comfort, in every good word and work, are the effects of this *good hope*. Thus saith the Apostle, to the believing Thessalonians, "now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us *everlasting consolation* and *good hope*, through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."

II.—Hope supports the believer under the many heavy trials persecutions and afflictions, which he experiences while journeying towards the heavenly country. Without it like a ship without anchor or ballast in a tempestuous sea, he would be tossed about with every wind and wave of adversity and not comforted. But the pleasing hope that he shall be enabled to surmount all his present difficulties, enables him to bear them with patience and resignation to the will of God. It was this blessed hope which sustained the Apostle Paul under his accumulated load of afflictions and which encouraged him to say, “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” And again saith he, “I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Thus animated by divine hope the believer presses on, through every opposing trial, towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; neither is he weary in well doing.

III.—Hope looks beyond the present state of things, and contemplates, with pleasing expectation, the felicity of heaven. Therefore, saith an Apostle, “We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it?” Behold, then, the excellency of this inestimable grace. It lays hold upon the promises of the divine word, which are yea and Amen, in Christ Jesus, and anticipates a never ending blessedness in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb. “In thy presence,” saith the enraptured Psalmist, “there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” This hope has for its security the immutability, promise, and oath of Jehovah. Hear what holy Paul saith respecting it. “Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things, in which it



was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon *the hope* set before us: which *hope* we have as *an anchor* of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." Thus, those who have fled for refuge, and laid hold on the hope set before them, have a source of strong consolation given them in the oath and covenant of God. This they greatly need in consequence of their weakness, various afflictions and remaining corruptions. Hope in God preserves the Believer, as a strong cable and anchor enables a ship to out-ride the howling tempest.

What renders this hope more sure and stedfast is, it "enters within the vail," and fixes the heart with joyful expectation on those glorious realities which are contained in the true holy of holies. It stays the believer on the faithfulness and love of God, as engaged in Christ Jesus to bring him to the enjoyment of the heavenly felicity, which his great fore-runner has prepared for him.

IV.—Hope particularly supports the believer in the last trying scene of life. With David he can say, in the near prospect of death; "And now Lord what wait I for? my hope is in thee." What was it, my brethren, that supported the holy martyrs in the midst of the flames? Was it not hope in Christ? Yes, most assuredly. Their hope in respect of its object was not temporary. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable." But they were not miserable; they rejoiced; for their well founded hope in Christ extended beyond this life. "They rejoiced in hope of the glory of God," "They were strong in faith giving glory to their God:" And the sweet odour of that sacrifice, which they offered unto him, has been wafted down to us through the long intervening tracks of time. Thus, "the example of the pious, more beneficial to us than precept, sheds a lustre on the varied path of life: Their dissolution, generally happy, some times triumphant, but always safe, hangs a lamp of hope for us in the gloomy vale of Death." But this grace, like faith,

shall cease when the believer shall have entered upon the rest and blessedness of heaven. Faith will then be changed into vision, and hope into enjoyment. Faith and hope serve to support and cheer us while passing through this dark and gloomy world; but shall be lost in the full blaze of heavenly splendor. Thus supported, let us, my brethren, go on our way rejoicing, in full assurance of faith, and hope unto the end.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the last grace of the spirit mentioned in the text. viz.

III.—CHARITY. “And now abideth, faith, hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

By Charity, we are to understand love to God, the father, son and holy spirit, and to men. This grace, like its distinguished companions, faith and hope, acknowledges none other, than an heavenly origin. It is an exotic found only in the soul cultivated by grace. Satan is a stranger to it; he fears, but cannot love; neither do wicked men love God, for, saith an Apostle, “the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

I.—The believer, who has experienced an implantation of this grace in his soul, as naturally loves God, the great source of love, in return, as the moon reflects the light which she derives from the sun: He loves God on account of his own inherent perfections, which render him completely glorious, independently and eternally happy in the enjoyment of himself. He also loves God on account of those wonderful emanations of his character which are displayed in the works of creation, providence and grace. The fair fabric of nature proclaims his power and wisdom. His providence manifests his tender, parental kindness towards the children of men; but his grace most astonishingly exhibits his condescension and mercy in the salvation of sinners. Man had sinned. He had transgressed the holy law of God. Divine justice, therefore, required satisfaction at his hand. The sinner had nothing to pay. Death and destruction appeared inevitable. We may well suppose that all heaven stood in awful suspence, waiting to know whether God would reverse the dread penalty of his law and liberate

the sinner; or lift the flaming sword of justice and cut the rebel down! They had not waited long when the voice of mercy, that mildest attribute of deity, was heard from between the cherubims, uttering the gracious sentence, "spare the guilty, for I have found a ransom." Here the divine character stands displayed in the most engaging point of view! Here the attributes of deity appear to us in their highest lustre! They concentrate and shine with refulgent, dazzling glory, in redeeming love! The love of God is an ocean unfathomable and unlimited! It is an everlasting love, and will be continued towards his people throughout eternity! Surely, then, my brethren, our affections must be torpid, lifeless—our hearts harder than rocks of adamant, if we do not love a being of such stupendous love and mercy.

The angels, who never fell, are the objects of the divine love; and they love in return. This is evident from their cheerful obedience to their God and from their songs of praise around his throne. They tune their golden harps and in full chorus, celebrate the praise of him whose presence creates their joy, and fills the heavenly mansions with ineffable glory. And shall we, who have fallen from our primeval rectitude, who have forfeited our lives to divine justice; but who, notwithstanding, have experienced forgiveness, the mercy and the love of God; shall we, my brethren, refuse to love and praise him? certainly not. No, sooner than not love our God, may we cease to exist.

And secondly, if we love the father supremely, let us also love the son, whom he hath sent: For it his sovereign pleasure "that all men should honour the son even as they honour the father:" And he is worthy. Let us then, love the Saviour. His love towards us was prior to ours towards him. Well did the beloved disciple say, "we love him because he first loved us." Shall we, for a moment, contemplate his love? Behold it, then, manifested in his voluntarily offering to become the mediator between his offended father and offending, wretched, helpless sinners. To save them from the condemnation of hell, and to raise them to the heights of bliss and glory in the heavens, the Saviour laid aside his robes of

majesty and honor; took upon him the form of a servant; was clothed in a body of human nature; suffered the contradiction of sinners against himself, agonized in the garden of Gethsemane, and expired on the torturing cross. He groaned; he bled, and died! Was ever love like this? Surely not. When faith, therefore, lays hold upon the everlasting covenant, and reconciliation, with God, is obtained through his precious merits, love must reign in the heart towards the redeemer. "To you, therefore, which believe, he is precious." With holy David the pious heart exclaims, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee:" Or, in the language of the delighted spouse, "thou art the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely."

"A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,  
Had I no love to thee,  
Rather than not my Saviour love,  
O may I cease to be."

But, thirdly: Love directs its regard towards the holy spirit, the comforter. Under his saving influence the soul is brought to perceive the evil of sin. When the divine spirit has humbled the sinner on account of sin, and beholds him cut off from all dependance on himself, for righteousness and strength, he leads him to Christ, as the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; and inspires him with that faith, in the blessed redeemer by which he obtains peace with God. "Therefore," saith the Apostle, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Not only my brethren, does the spirit of God convince of sin, lead to repentance and direct the soul to Christ; but he also abides with the people of God, as their sanctifier and comforter. Under his divine influence they are enabled to grow in grace and are matured for heaven and everlasting felicity. Surely then, it behoves us to love the holy spirit; to cherish his influence upon our hearts, and to obey his dictates in all our researches after truth and efforts to obtain holiness. If we follow the leadings

of this heavenly guide we shall never err from the path of rectitude; but shall, most assuredly, persevere unto the end of our pilgrimage.

IV.—True charity, or love, the inseparable concomitant of evangelical faith, also manifests itself towards the people of God, of every denomination. It knows no distinction: for, “if we love him who begat, we must also love those who are begotten of him.” It is a striking characteristic of the disciples of Jesus Christ: “By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one towards another.” Indeed the Apostle, John, considers it as a very strong proof of regeneration. “We know, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

Influenced by this heavenly grace, we shall live in peace with all men; but especially with those who are of the household of faith. In imitation of our divine master, we shall go about doing good. The cheerful hand of liberality shall be extended to supply the wants of the poor, and needy. The helpless Orphan shall be adopted, and experience, even from strangers, parental care and tenderness; and the widow’s heart shall be made to sing for joy.

But, my brethren, this is is not all. The spiritual and eternal welfare of our fellow creatures shall more peculiarly engage our attention. For their present happiness and everlasting salvation our prayers shall ascend to the throne of God.

We shall now proceed to shew wherein charity may be considered *greater than faith* and hope. Charity, on every account is not, perhaps, to be considered greater than faith and hope. Faith, at times may appear to exceed charity; but the latter grace seems to be represented the greatest from its durability, comprehensive nature and blessed effects, which the Apostle has fully shewn in the verses preceding the text. It includes faith, and hope, as appears evident from the 7th verse of this chapter, where charity is represented as bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things. Without it faith and hope are nothing; for, saith the apostle, “though I have all faith,

so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

If faith and hope are not only of excellent use to their possessors, but become highly beneficial in their operation and influence to other individuals, and to the world at large, it is love which disposes and enables the christian to make such use of them. By love, saints serve one another, both in things temporal and spiritual. Without this great and inestimable grace our world would be a scene of confusion—a perfect aceldama, a field of blood. But, when love reigns in the heart, "it doth not behave itself unseemly," towards men; "seeketh not her own" private advantage only, but the prosperity and happiness of others; "is not easily provoked," with the insults and reproaches of the ungodly; "thinketh no evil," respecting the character of the saints, but covereth their infirmities with her white mantle of benevolence.

Again, it not only seeks to promote the temporal and spiritual happiness of the saints and others, and to banish from the world, in general the baneful passions, such as anger, malice and revenge; but it renders its possessors truly happy. Genuine love to God and man, excludes from the mind whatever would offend or be injurious. It cultivates all the mild and amiable qualities of the soul. In a word, charity looks beyond the present life and anticipates eternity, where all her expectations shall be consummated. As all the streams which water and refresh our earth are derived from the ocean, and return thither again; so charity, divine charity, which proceeds from God, the boundless ocean of love, shall to him return. It will constitute the happiness of the heavenly state when faith and hope shall have ceased forever. In this respect, therefore, it may be said to be the greatest of the three graces mentioned in the text, because the most durable.

Faith shall be changed into fruition, and hope into perfect enjoyment; but love shall be in constant operation throughout, a never-ending eternity! The soul redeemed by the blood of Christ, with ecstatic delight, joy and love, shall forever gaze on the glories of the sacred three. It shall admire the wisdom, condescension and mercy of



God the father, in planning the great work of salvation; the amazing love of Christ in executing this glorious plan; and the benignity of the holy spirit, in applying to the heart, the blessings of redemption. Filled with the contemplation of this delightful, stupendous subject, the blest inhabitants of heaven shall be overwhelmed with love. This divine passion shall strengthen and burn with unextinguished beams through the revolutions of vast and boundless eternity!

“ Love is the grace which keeps its power,  
 In all the realms above;  
 There faith and hope are known no more,  
 But saints *forever love.*”

Having attempted an explanation of faith, hope and charity, the cardinal graces of the spirit, and shewn wherein the latter may be considered greater than the two former, we shall now hasten to an improvement of the subject.

I.—You have heard, my brethren, what true, evangelical faith is. Some of its acts and effects have also been described. You may now fairly prove yourselves whether you have true faith, or not. Have you been made sensible of the evil of sin? Have you perceived it to be an enemy to your present and everlasting peace and happiness? If so, what influence has it had upon your mind? Have you, thereby, been led to repentance? Have you sought deliverance from the power and dominion of sin? And, if you have, in what way have you sought it? By the deeds of the law; or through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Remember an Apostle has said, “ By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” And again, he saith, “ If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” But, if ye have not trusted to the sandy foundation of your own works, upon what object has your faith rested? Have you been enabled to come to Christ as poor, helpless and undone sinners? Have you beheld all the fulness of the godhead dwelling bodily in him; and, also the fulness of grace, as he is the surety of his people, who has finished trans-

gression, made an end of sin-offering, and brought in everlasting righteousness for them? Has your faith embraced this righteousness? If so, you have obtained peace with God. You have been enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. You also esteem the service of Christ; it is your pleasure and delight. You can say, from happy experience, "Thy yoke is easy, O Lord, and thy burden light!" With pleasure you now read the word of God. It is the man of your counsel and the director of your steps through this waste howling wilderness. You can now go to a throne of grace with holy boldness, knowing that you have an advocate with the father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. O! what consolation do you now enjoy in believing! Go on, beloved brethren; increase in faith and in the knowledge of Jesus. You are now tending towards that glorious state where faith shall no longer be needed; but where it shall receive its perfect consummation in the realms of bliss. In addition to faith you have,

II.—Hope, to animate and support you. This grace you greatly need. The remains of sin and inward corruption render it necessary. Were it not for hope you would frequently be ready to sink under the many heavy afflictions which your heavenly father is pleased to lay upon you. But, having laid hold on the hope set before you, you can now venture forward in confident expectation of realizing the joys of heaven. This hope you have, as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, where Jesus the forerunner has for you entered. Encouraged by this precious grace, be exhorted to press forward, in your career to immortal glory. Let not the difficulties and trials of this mortal life impede your progress: Remember, they are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed hereafter. Look towards the celestial city, whither the captain of your salvation has gone, to prepare mansions of rest and blessedness for you. Continue to hope unto the end. Ere long, when you shall have dropped the shackles of mortality, you shall bid adieu to hope, having obtained what you had long been



hoping for, even deliverance from this body of sin and death, and the full possession of immortal beatitude in the presence of God and the lamb.

Lastly, be exhorted, my brethren, to cultivate divine charity, as it has been explained in the preceding discourse. Without it, all attainments in religion, are nothing more than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The Apostle considers it as holding a pre-eminent rank among the christian graces and virtues. Hear his glowing description of it, and you will then perceive its vast importance. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, &c."

Permit me, my brethren in the ministry, with diffidence, to recommend this grace of the spirit, to your serious attention. Without love to God, and to man, all your ministrations will prove unsavory. Love to God will make you diligent in his service. You will thereby be induced to prepare yourselves for your master's work. For this purpose you will read his word with delight and endeavour to acquaint yourselves with it's doctrines. Having your minds enriched with knowledge, from this divine source, you will prove yourselves to be workmen who need not to be ashamed. Bible preachers are the most successful. God will most assuredly bless the labors of those who, having their hearts influenced by divine love, and not the applause of men, preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. It is greatly to be lamented that too many preach themselves and not Christ Jesus the Lord. Secondly, let divine love influence you to be faithful to the soul's of your fellow men. Consider their awful state by nature and their ignorance of it. Present to their view, therefore, the sinfulness and deceitfulness of their hearts. Endeavour to make sin appear as it is, exceeding sinful, and highly offensive to God. Exhibit the extent and purity of the divine law. Discourage all dependance upon a false foundation. Point to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only sure foundation of the sinner's hope. In a word, preach repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—display the blessings, the riches of the gospel. Be encouraged to abound in the work of the Lord from the pleasing recollection

“that they who turn many unto righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.”

Finally, let christians of every description, cultivate this heavenly passion. Angels and arch-angels, the cherubim and seraphim, glorified saints, yea all the shining ranks of heaven, glow with immortal love. They evidence that their hearts are warmed and animated with this heavenly flame. Behold them bending before the throne of God, and hear their fervent, devout adoration, “Holy! holy! holy! is the Lord of hosts!” Let Bethlehem’s Shepherds announce the joy, the rapture, the ecstatic delight, the transporting love, which the angels evinced at the saviour’s birth, and at the prospect of man’s deliverance from the captivity of Satan; “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.” Imitate their bright example. Let love towards God and Christ reign in your hearts and influence all your deportment. Walk in all his statutes and ordinances, as the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

“Let love be without dissimulation one towards another; abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.” Be united, as a band of brethren, in the cause of your common Lord.

This is an evil day, in which you live. God’s judgments are abroad in the earth; yet iniquity still abounds. Beware lest ye be carried away with the flood of errors which overspreads the earth. Be diligent at the throne of grace. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” Out of chaos God created the world; so, out of the present confused and awful state of things which sin has produced, he will ere long, produce peace and order. The banner of the cross shall be displayed in every clime. The gospel’s joyful sound shall be heard proclaiming peace and good will towards men, even to the ends of the earth. Ere long the strong-lunged angel, the mighty Gabriel, standing with one foot upon the land and the other on the sea, shall swear, by him who liveth forever and ever, that time, on earth

shall be no more! Then shall love be displayed in all its strong and attracting influence. Christ shall receive his people to dwell forever in his presence; to inherit the kingdom, which he has prepared for them, and to wear a weighty crown of glory, sparkling with stars infinitely more brilliant than those which now decorate the mantle of night. They shall also acknowledge him as their redeemer; and while following him in solemn procession into the mansions of eternal day, shall shout aloud, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Faith and hope shall now cease forever, but love shall reign throughout a blessed immortality. O! Lord God Almighty, grant that we may participate of this felicity; and to thy name shall be the glory. Amen.

*F I N I S.*

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