

## LECTURE II.

### CHARITY MORE EXCELLENT THAN THE EXTRA- ORDINARY GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

“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.”—1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

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, &c., 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' wish, recorded in Num. xi. 29, had become in a great measure fulfilled : " Would God that 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, speaking 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 of 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, &c." "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 all prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge," to see 'nto 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 to 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, &c., 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 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 pecu-

liar to the godly. And the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are common gifts. The gifts of tongues, of miracles, of prophecy, &c., 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, Matt. vii. 22, 23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have 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 any one 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

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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 improved 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. ii. 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. v. 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; for as much as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel." This privi-

lege was also the thing which gave Daniel honor in the Persian court. (Dan. vi. 1, 2, 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. xxi. 14: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb." Eph. ii. 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 Scriptures 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 which on the day of Pentecost was foretold and spoken of by the prophet Joel, as a very great privilege, in those forecited words in Joel ii. 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: Matt. xvi. 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,

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Psal. cvi. 16. And so Joshua was ready to envy Eldad and Medad because they prophesied in the camp: Num. xi. 27. And when the angels themselves have been sent to do the work of the prophets, to reveal things to come, it has set them in a very honorable point of light. Even the Apostle John himself, in his great surprise, was once and again ready to fall down and worship the angel, that was sent by Christ to reveal to him the future events of the church; but the angel forbids him, acknowledging that the privilege of the spirit of prophecy which he had, was not of himself, but that he had received it of Jesus Christ: Rev. xix. 10, and xxii. 8, 9. The heathen of the city of Lystra were so astonished at the power the Apostles Barnabas and Paul had to work miracles, that they were about to offer sacrifices to them as gods: Acts xiv. 11, 12, 13. And Simon the sorcerer had a great hankering after that gift that the Apostles had of conferring the Holy Ghost, by laying on their hands, and offered them money for it.

These extraordinary gifts are a great privilege, in that there is in them a conformity to Christ in his prophetic office. And the

greatness of the privilege appears also in this, that though sometimes they have been bestowed on natural men, yet it has been very rarely ; and commonly such as have had them bestowed on them have been saints, yea, and the most eminent saints. Thus it was on the day of Pentecost ; and thus it was in more early ages. II. Pet. i. 21: " Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." These gifts have commonly been bestowed as tokens of God's extraordinary favor and love, as it was with Daniel. He was a man *greatly beloved*, and therefore he was admitted to such a great privilege, as that of having these revelations made to him : Dan. ix. 23, and x. 11, 19. And the Apostle John, as he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, so he was selected above all the other Apostles, to be the man to whom those great events were revealed that we have an account of in the book of the Revelation. I come now,

III. *To show, that though these are great privileges, yet that the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God, working the grace of charity in the heart, is a far more excellent privilege than any of them : a greater blessing than the spirit of prophecy, or the gift of tongues,*

or of miracles, even to the removing of mountains; a greater blessing than all those miraculous gifts that Moses, and Elijah, and David, and the twelve Apostles were endowed with. This will appear, if we consider,

1. *This blessing of the saving grace of God is a quality inherent in the nature of him that is the subject of it.*—This gift of the Spirit of God, working a truly Christian temper in the soul, and exciting gracious exercises there, confers a blessing that has its seat in the heart, a blessing that makes a man's heart or nature excellent; yea, the very excellency of the nature does consist in it. Now it is not so with respect to these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. They are excellent things, but not properly the excellency of a man's nature, for they are not things that are inherent in the nature. For instance, if a man is endowed with a gift of working miracles, this power is not anything inherent in his nature. It is not properly any quality of the heart and nature of the man, as true grace and holiness are; and though most commonly, those that have these extraordinary gifts of prophecy, speaking with tongues and working miracles, have been holy persons, yet their holiness did not

consist in their having these gifts. These extraordinary gifts are nothing properly inherent in the man. They are something adventitious. They are excellent things, but not excellences in the nature of the subject. They are like a beautiful garment, which does not alter the nature of the man that wears it. They are like precious jewels, with which the body may be adorned ; but true grace is that whereby the very soul itself becomes as it were a precious jewel.

2. *The Spirit of God communicates himself much more in bestowing saving grace than in bestowing these extraordinary gifts.*—In the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost does indeed produce effects, in men, or by men ; but not so as properly to communicate himself, in his own proper nature, to men. A man may have an extraordinary impulse in his mind by the Spirit of God, whereby some future thing may be revealed to him ; or he may have an extraordinary vision given him representing some future event ; and yet the Spirit may not at all impart himself, in his holy nature, by that. The Spirit of God may produce effects in things in which he does not communicate himself to us. Thus the Spirit

of God moved on the face of the waters, but not so as to impart himself to the water. But when the Spirit, by his ordinary influences, bestows saving grace, he therein imparts himself to the soul in his own holy nature,—that nature of his, on the account of which, he is so often called in Scripture, the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit. By his producing this effect, the Spirit becomes an indwelling vital principle in the soul, and the subject becomes spiritual, being denominated so from the Spirit of God that dwells in him, and whose nature he is partaker of. Yea, grace is, as it were, the holy nature of the Spirit imparted to the soul. But the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as knowing things to come, or having power to work miracles, do not imply this holy nature. Not but that God, when he gives the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, is commonly wont to give the sanctifying influences of the Spirit with them; but one does not imply the other. And if God gives only extraordinary gifts, such as the gift of prophecy, of miracles, &c., these alone will never make their receiver a partaker of the Spirit, so as to become spiritual in himself, *i. e.*, in his own nature.



3. *That grace or holiness, which is the effect of the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, is that wherein the spiritual image of God consists ; and not in these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.*—The spiritual image of God does not consist in having a power to work miracles, and foretell future events, but it consists in being holy as God is holy: in having a holy and divine principle in the heart, influencing us to holy and heavenly lives. Indeed, there is a kind of assimilation to Christ in having a power to work miracles, for Christ had such a power, and wrought a multitude of miracles, John xiv. 12: “The works that I do, shall he do also.” But the moral image and likeness of Christ does much more consist in having *the same mind in us which was in Christ*; in being of the same Spirit that he was of; in being meek and lowly of heart; in having a spirit of Christian love, and walking as Christ walked. This makes a man more like Christ than if he could work ever so many miracles.

4. *That grace which is the effect of the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God, is a privilege which God bestows only on his own favorites and children, but the extraordinary*

*gifts of the Spirit are not so.*—It has been observed before, that though God most commonly has chosen saints and eminent saints to bestow extraordinary gifts of the Spirit upon, yet he has not always done so; but these gifts are sometimes bestowed on others. They have been common to both the godly and the ungodly. Balaam is stigmatized in Scripture as a wicked man, 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11; Rev. ii. 14; and yet he had the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God for awhile. Saul was a wicked man, but we read, once and again, of his being *among the prophets*. Judas was one of those whom Christ sent forth to preach and work miracles: he was one of those twelve disciples, of whom it is said in Matt. x. 1: “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease.” And in the next verses we are told who they were, their names are all rehearsed over, and “Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him,” among the rest. And in verse 8, Christ says to them, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.” The grace of God in the heart, is a

gift of the Holy Ghost peculiar to the saints. It is a blessing that God reserves only for those who are the objects of his special and peculiar love. But the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are what God sometimes bestows on those whom he does not love, but hates ; which is a sure sign that the one is infinitely more precious and excellent than the other. That is the most precious gift, which is most of an evidence of God's love. But the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were, in the days of inspiration and miracles, no sure sign of the love of God. The prophets were not wont to build their persuasion of the favor and love of God on their being prophets, and having revelations ; but on their being sincere saints. Thus, it was with David. See Psal. xv. 1-5, and xvii. 1-3, and cxix. throughout : and indeed, the whole Book of Psalms bears witness to this. So the Apostle Paul, though he was so greatly privileged with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, was yet so far from making these the evidences of his good estate, that he expressly declares, that without charity they are all nothing. And hence we may argue,

5. *From the fruit and consequence of these two different things, that the one is infinitely*

*more excellent than the other.*—Eternal life is, by the promises of the gospel, constantly connected with the one, and never with the other. Salvation is promised to those who have the graces of the Spirit, but not to those who have merely the extraordinary gifts. Many may have these last, and yet go to hell. Judas Iscariot had them, and is gone to hell. And Christ tells us, that many who have had them, will, at the last day, be bid to depart, as workers of iniquity, Matt. vii. 22, 23. And therefore when he promised his disciples these extraordinary gifts, he bade them rejoice, not because the devils were subject to them, but because their names were written in heaven, intimating that the one might be, and yet not the other, Luke x. 17, &c. And this shows that the one is an infinitely greater blessing than the other, as it carries eternal life in it. For eternal life is a thing of infinite worth and value, and that must be an excellent blessing indeed that has this infallibly connected with it, and of infinitely more worth than any privilege whatsoever, which a man may possess, and yet after all go to hell.

6. *Happiness itself does much more immediately and essentially consist in Christian*

*grace, wrought by the ordinary influences of the Spirit, than in these extraordinary gifts.* Man's highest happiness consists in holiness, for it is by this that the reasonable creature is united to God, the fountain of all good. Happiness doth so essentially consist in knowing, loving, and serving God, and having the holy and divine temper of soul, and the lively exercises of it, that these things will make a man happy without anything else; but no other enjoyments or privileges whatsoever will make a man happy without this.

7. *This divine temper of soul, which is the fruit of the ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit, is the end of all the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost.*—The gift of prophecy, of miracles, of tongues, &c., God gave for this very end, to promote the propagation and establishment of the gospel in the world. And the end of the gospel is, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to serve the living God, *i. e.*, to make men holy. The end of all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, is the conversion of sinners, and the building up of saints in that holiness which is the fruit of the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost. For this, the Holy Spirit

was poured out on the Apostles after Christ's ascension ; and they were enabled to speak with tongues, work miracles, &c. ; and for this, very many others, in that age, were endued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, Eph. iv. 11: "And he gave some, Apostles : and some, Prophets : and some, Evangelists." Here the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are referred to ; and the end of all is expressed in the next words, viz. : "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And what sort of *edifying* of the body of Christ this is, we learn from verse 16: "Maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." IN *love*, that is, in *charity*, the same that is spoken of in our text, for the word in the original is the same, and the same thing is meant. And so it is the same as in 1 Cor. viii. 1: *charity edifieth*.

But the end is always more excellent than the means : this is a maxim universally allowed ; for means have no goodness in them any otherwise than as they are subordinate to the end. The end therefore must be considered as superior in excellency to the means.

8. *The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit*

*will be so far from profiting without that grace which is the fruit of the ordinary influences of the Spirit, that they will but aggravate the condemnation of those that have them.* Doubtless Judas' condemnation was exceedingly aggravated by his having been one that had had such privileges. And some, that have had such extraordinary gifts, have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and their privileges were a main thing that rendered their sin, the unpardonable sin ; as appears from Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6 : " For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance : seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Those who *fell away*, were such as apostatized from Christianity after having made a public profession of it, and received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as most Christians did in those days. They were instructed in Christianity, and through the common influences of the Spirit they received the word with joy,

like those in Matt. xiii. 20; and witha. received the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit: "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come;" spake with tongues; prophesied in Christ's name; and in his name cast out devils; and yet after all, openly renounced Christianity; joined to call Christ an impostor, as his murderers did; and so "crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Of these it is that the Apostle says: "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Such apostates, in their renouncing Christianity, must ascribe the miraculous powers which themselves had possessed to the devil. So their case became hopeless; and their condemnation must be exceedingly aggravated. And from this it appears that saving grace is of infinitely more worth and excellence, than the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. And, lastly,

9. *Another thing that shows the preferableness of that saving grace, which is the fruit of the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, to the extraordinary gifts, is, that one will fail, and the other will not.*—This argument the Apostle makes use of, in the context, to



show that divine love is preferable to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, verse 8: "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." Divine love will remain throughout all eternity, but the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will fail in time. They are only of the nature of means, and when the end is obtained they shall cease; but divine love will remain forever. In the improvement of this subject, I remark:

1. *If saving grace is a greater blessing than the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, we may doubtless hence argue, that it is the greatest privilege and blessing that ever God bestows on any person in this world.*—For these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, such as the gift of tongues, of miracles, of prophecy, &c., are the highest kind of privileges that God ever bestows on natural men, and privileges which have been very rarely bestowed on such, in any age of the world, the apostolic age excepted.

If what has been said be well considered, it will appear evident beyond all doubt, that the saving grace of God in the heart, working a

holy and divine temper in the soul, is the greatest blessing that ever men receive in this world: greater than any natural gifts, greater than the greatest natural abilities, greater than any acquired endowments of mind, greater than the most universal learning, greater than any outward wealth and honor, greater than to be a king or an emperor, greater than to be taken from the sheepcote, as David was, and made king over all Israel; and all the riches and honor and magnificence of Solomon in all his glory, are not to be compared with it.

Great was the privilege that God bestowed on the blessed Virgin Mary, in granting that of her should be born the Son of God. That a person, who was infinitely more honorable than the angels, yea, who was the Creator and King of heaven and earth, the great sovereign of the world, that such an one should be conceived in her womb, born of her, and nursed at her breasts, was a greater privilege than for her to be the mother of the child of the greatest earthly prince that ever lived, yet even that was not so great a privilege, as to have the grace of God in the heart; to have Christ, as it were, born in the soul, as he himself doth

expressly teach us, in Luke xi. 27, 28: "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." But he said, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." And once when some told him, that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, he thence took occasion to let them know, that there was a more blessed way of being related to him than that which consisted in being his mother and brethren according to the flesh, Matt. xii, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50: "Who is my mother?" said he, "and who are my brethren?" and he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren, For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

2. *Hence these two kinds of privileges are not to be confounded, by taking things that have some appearance of an extraordinary miraculous gift of the Spirit, for sure signs of grace.*—If persons at any time have some extraordinary impression made upon their

minds, which they think is from God, revealing something to them that shall come to pass hereafter, this, if it were real, would argue an extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost, viz. the gift of prophecy; but, from what has been said, it is evident, that it would be no certain sign of grace, or of anything saving: even if it were real, I say, for indeed we have no reason to look on such things when pretended to, in these days, as any other than delusion. And the fact that such impressions are made by texts of Scripture coming suddenly to the mind, alters not the case; for a text of Scripture coming to the mind, proves no more to be true, than the reading of it proves. If reading any text of Scripture, at any time, and at all times, as it lies in the Bible, does not prove such a thing, then its coming suddenly to the mind does not prove it; for the Scripture speaks just the same thing at one time, as it does at another. The words have the same meaning when they are read along in course, as they have when they are suddenly brought to the mind. And if any man therefore argues anything further from them, he proceeds without warrant. For their coming suddenly to the mind does not give them

a new meaning, which they had not before. So if a man thinks that he is in a good estate, because such a text of Scripture comes suddenly to his mind, if the text does not prove it, as it lies in the Bible, and if it would not have proved it, had he only read it, as he was reading along in course, then by such a text coming to his mind, he has no evidence that he is in a good estate. So if anything appears to persons, as though they had a vision of some visible form, and heard some voice, such things are not to be taken as signs of grace, for if they are real and from God, they are not grace, for the extraordinary influence of the Spirit, producing visions and dreams, such as the prophets of old had, are no sure signs of grace. All the fruits of the Spirit, which we are to lay weight upon as evidential of grace, are summed up in charity, or Christian love; because this is the sum of all grace. And the only way, therefore, in which any can know their good estate, is by discerning the exercises of this divine charity in their hearts, for without charity, let men have what gifts you please, they are nothing.

3. *If saving grace is more excellent than the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, then we*

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*cannot conclude from what the Scripture says of the glory of the latter times of the church, that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will be granted to men in those times.*—Many have been ready to think that, in those glorious times of the church, which shall be after the calling of the Jews, and the destruction of Antichrist, there will be many persons that will be inspired, and endued with a power of working miracles. But what the Scripture says concerning the glory of those times does not prove any such thing, or make it probable. For it has been shown, that the pouring out of the Spirit of God, in his ordinary and saving operations, to fill men's hearts with a Christian and holy temper, and lead them to the exercises of the divine life, is the most glorious way of pouring out the Spirit, that can be ; more glorious, far more glorious, than a pouring out of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. And therefore the glory of those times of the church does not require any such thing as those extraordinary gifts. Those times may be far the most glorious times of the church, that ever have been, without them. Their not having the gift of prophecy, of tongues, of healing, &c., as they had in the

Apostolic age, will not hinder there being far more glorious times than there were then, if the Spirit be poured out in greater measure in his sanctifying influences; for this, as the Apostle expressly asserts, is a more excellent way, 1 Cor. xii. 31. This glory is the greatest glory of the church of Christ; and the greatest glory which Christ's church will ever enjoy in any period. This is what will make the church more like the church in heaven, where charity or love hath a more perfect reign, than any number or degree of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit could do. So that we have no reason on this account, and perhaps not on any other, to expect that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will be poured out in those glorious times which are yet to come. For in those times, there is no new dispensation to be introduced, and no new Bible to be given. Nor have we any reason to expect our present Scriptures are to be added to and enlarged; but rather in the end of the sacred writings which we now have, it seems to be intimated, that no addition is to be made till Christ comes. See Rev. xxii. 18-21.

4. *What cause have they to bless God, and*

*to live to his glory, who have received such a privilege, as is implied in the influence of the Holy Spirit, working saving grace in the heart.*

If we do but seriously consider the state of the godly, of those who have been the subjects of this inexpressible blessing, we cannot but be astonished at the wonderful grace bestowed upon them. And the more we consider it, the more wonderful and inexpressible it will appear. When we read in the Scriptures of the great privileges conferred on the Virgin Mary, and on the Apostle Paul, when he was caught up into the third heaven, we are ready to admire such privileges as very great. But after all, they are as nothing compared with the privilege of being like Christ, and having his love in the heart. Let those, then, that hope they have this last blessing, consider more than they ever yet have done, how great a favor God has bestowed upon them, and how great their obligations to glorify him for the work he hath wrought in them, and to glorify Christ who hath purchased this blessing for them with his own blood, and to glorify the Holy Spirit who hath sealed it to their souls. What manner of persons ought such to be in all holy conversation and godli-



ness ! Consider, you that hope in God's mercy, how highly he hath advanced and exalted you ; and will you not be diligent to live for him ? Will you dishonor Christ so as to regard him but little, not giving him your whole heart, but going after the world, neglecting him, and his service, and his glory ? Will you not be watchful against yourselves, against a corrupt, worldly, proud disposition, that might lead you away from God who has been so kind to you, and from the Saviour who has purchased such blessings for you, at the cost of his own agonies and death ? Will you not every day make this your earnest inquiry, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me ?" What could God have done more for you than he has done ? What privilege could he have bestowed, better in itself, or more worthy to engage your heart in thankfulness ? And consider how you are living—how little you have done for him—how much you do for self—how little this divine love hath wrought in your heart to incline you to live for God and Christ, and for the extension of his kingdom ? O ! how should such as you, show your sense of your high privileges, by the exercises of

love ; love that is manifest toward God in obedience, submission, reverence, cheerfulness, joy and hope, and toward your neighbor, in meekness, sympathy, humility, charitableness, and doing good to all as you have opportunity. Finally,

5. *The subject exhorts all unrenewed persons, those who are strangers to this grace, to seek this most excellent blessing for themselves :* Consider how miserable you now are while wholly destitute of this love, far from righteousness, in love with the vanities of the world, and full of enmity against God. How will you endure when he shall deal with you according to what you are, coming forth in anger as your enemy, and executing his fierce wrath against you. Consider, too, that you are capable of this love ; and Christ is able and willing to bestow it ; and multitudes have obtained it, and been blessed in it. God is seeking your love, and you are under unspeakable obligation to render it. The Spirit of God has been poured out wonderfully here. Multitudes have been converted. Scarcely a family has been passed by. In almost every household some have been made nobles, kings, and priests unto God, sons and daughters of

the Lord Almighty! What manner of persons, then, ought all of us to be, how holy, serious, just, humble, charitable, devoted in God's service, and faithful to our fellow-men. As individuals and as a people, God has most richly blessed us, and as both individuals and a people, it becomes us to be a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, showing forth the praises of him that hath called us all out of darkness into his marvellous light. "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God!"