

Charity and Its Fruits by Jonathon Edwards
Lesson 1

And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (I Corinthians 13:1-13)

Romans 5:1-5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

I John 3:23-24 and 4:12-13 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us....No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit.

Romans 13:8-10 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does not harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the

second is like it: 'Love our neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.' "

Galatians 5:13-14 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself.

James 2:8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

Galatians 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

1 John 3:11,16-19 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another....This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

John 15:9-17 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Excerpts by Edwards on the nature of truly Christian love – Chapter 1 – "Love the Sum of All Virtue"

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 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 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...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...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. (p. 4-5)

All virtue that is saving, or distinguishing of true Christians, is summed up in Christian love...love will dispose to all proper acts of respect to both God and man...Love to God will dispose a man to honour 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...If men have a sincere love to their neighbours, 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. xiii. 10) – “love worketh no ill to his neighbour.” (p. 6-7)

Whatever performances or seeming virtues there are without love, are unsound and hypocritical...Religion is nothing without proper respect to God. The very notion of religion among mankind, is, that it is the creature's exercise and expression of such respect toward the Creator. But if there be no true respect or love, then all that is called religion is but a seeming show, and there is no real religion in it, but it is unreal and vain...From this it appears, that love is always contained in a true and living faith, and that it is its true and proper life and soul, without which, faith is as dead as the body is without its soul; and that it is that which especially distinguishes a living faith from every other...without love, there can be no hearty submission to the will of God, and there can be no real and cordial trust and confidence in him. He that does not love God will not trust him: he never will, with true acquiescence of soul, cast himself into the hands of God, or into the arms of his mercy. (p. 9-10)

The Scriptures teach us that love is the sum of all that is contained in the law of God, and of all the duties required in his word...Hence love appears to be the sum of all the virtue and duty that God requires of us, and therefore must undoubtedly be the most essential thing – the sum of all the virtue that is essential and distinguishing in real Christianity...Love is no ingredient in a merely speculative faith, but it is the life and soul of a practical faith...He whose heart consents to Christ as a Saviour, has true love to him as such...The work of redemption which the gospel makes known, above all things affords motives to love; for that work was the most glorious and wonderful exhibition of love that was ever seen or heard of. (p. 11-19)

If so great a thing in Christianity, so essential and distinguishing, yea, the very sum of all Christian virtue, then surely those that profess themselves Christians should live in love, and abound in the works of love, for no works are so becoming as those of love. If you call yourself a Christian, where are your works of love? Have you abounded, and do you abound in them? If this divine and holy principle is in you, and reigns in you, will it not appear in your life in works of love? Consider, what deeds of love have you done? Do you love God? What have you done for him, for his glory, for the advancement of his kingdom to the world? And how much have you denied yourself to promote the Redeemer's interest among men? What have you done for them? Consider your former defects in these respects, and how becoming it is in you, as a Christian, hereafter to abound more in deeds of love. Do not make excuse that you have not opportunities to do anything for the glory of God, for the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the spiritual benefit of your neighbors. If your heart is full of love, it will find vent; you will find or make ways enough to express your love in deeds. When a fountain abounds in water, it will send forth streams. Consider that as a principle of love is the main principle in the heart of a real Christian, so the labour of love is in the main business of the Christian life. Let every Christian consider these things; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things, and make you sensible what spirit it becomes you to be of, and dispose you to such an excellent, amiable, and benevolent life, as is answerable to such a spirit, that you may not love only "in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth." (p. 24-25)