

Sermon XI- Jonathan Edwards
“All True Grace in the Heart Tends to Holy Practice in the Life”

1 Cor. 13: 6

“Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” [KJ]

“Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth” [NIV]

DOCTRINE: “That all true Christian grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life”.

What are some of the things that motivate us towards our given activities and behaviors in a day?

Arguments in favor of the doctrine

1. Holy practice is the aim of that eternal election which is the first ground of the bestowment of all true grace.

“God does not elect men because he foresees they will be holy, but that he may make them, and that they may be holy...Now God’s eternal election is the first ground of the bestowment of saving grace...And seeing that holy practice is the scope and aim of that which is the first ground of the bestowment of grace, this same holy practice is doubtless the tendency of grace itself.” p. 223

Ephesians 2:1-10*

John 15:16

Ephesians 1:4*

2. That redemption, by which grace is purchased, is to the same end

“The redemption made by Christ is the next ground of the bestowment of grace on all who possess it. Christ, by his merits, in the great things that he did and suffered in the world, has purchased grace and holiness for his own people – “For their sakes,” he says, “I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth (John 17:19).” p. 224

Colossians 1:21-22

Hebrews 9:14*

Matthew 1:21

Luke 1:68-75

Titus 2:11-14*

2 Corinthians 5:15*

3. That effectual calling, or that saving conversion in which grace is commenced in the soul, is to the same end.

“- God by his Spirit, and through his truth, calls, awakens, convicts, converts, and leads to the exercise of grace, all those who are made willing in the day of his power, to the end that they might exercise themselves in holy practice.” p. 225

1 Thessalonians 4:7

1 Peter 1:15*

4. That spiritual knowledge and understanding, which are the inward attendants of all true grace in the heart, tends to holy practice.

“- A true knowledge of God and divine things is a practical knowledge...He that has a right and saving acquaintance with divine things, sees the excellency of holiness, and of all the ways of holiness, for he sees the beauty and excellency of God, which consists in holiness; and, for the same reason, he sees the hatefulness of sin, and of all the ways of sin. And if a

man knows the hatefulfulness of the ways of sin, certainly this tends to his avoiding these ways; and if he sees the loveliness of the ways of holiness, this tends to incline him to walk in them.” p. 226

1 John 2:1-4*

5. From the more immediate consideration of the principle of grace itself, from which it will be seen that the tendency of all Christian grace is to practice
 - a. The faculty which is the immediate seat of it is the faculty of the will, which is the faculty that commands all a man’s actions and practice
 - b. It is the definition of grace, that it is a principle of holy action
 - c. That which is real and substantial is distinguished from that which is only a shadow or appearance, is, that it is effectual
 - d. The nature of a principle of grace is to be a principle of life, or a vital principle
 - e. True Christian grace is not only a principle of life, but an exceedingly powerful principle

How do we see the importance of our rejoicing in truth communicated in these passages?

Showing the truth of the doctrine with respect to particular graces

1. With respect to a true and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
“A true faith is a faith that works; whereas a false faith is barren and inoperative.” p. 230

Galations 5:6*

James 2:18*

- a. The conviction of the understanding and judgment, which is implied in saving faith tends to holy practice.
“He that has true faith is convinced of the reality and certainty of the great things of religion; and he that is convinced of the reality of these things will be influenced by them, and they will govern his actions and behavior...If men are convinced of the certain truth of the promises of the gospel, which promise eternal riches, and honours, and pleasures, and if they really believe that those are immensely more valuable than all the riches, and honours, and pleasures of the world, they will, for these, forsake the things of the world, and, if need be, sell all and follow Christ...Their practice will be according to their convictions...And so he will not be afraid to forego other ways of securing earthly happiness, because he is convinced that Christ alone is sufficient to bestow all needed happiness upon him.” pp. 230-232
- b. That act of the will, which there is in saving faith, tends to holy practice.
“He that, by the act of his will, does truly accept of Christ as a Saviour; accepts of him as a Saviour from sin, and not merely as a Saviour from the punishment of sin... he...receives Christ by a living faith, closes with him as Lord and King to rule over and reign in him, and not merely as a priest to make atonement for him.” p. 232

- c. All the true trust in God, that is implied in saving faith tends to holy practice.
“The very idea of our trusting in another, is, resting or living in acquiescence of mind and heart in the full persuasion of his sufficiency and faithfulness, so as to be ready fully to venture on him in our actions...if we trust in God, we shall not be afraid to venture labour; and fighting, and watching, and suffering, and all things for him, since he has so abundantly promised to reward these things with that which will infinitely more than make up for all the losses or difficulties or sorrows we may experience in the way of duty.” pp. 233-234
2. With respect to all true love to God
“Love is an active principle...The whole world of mankind are chiefly kept in action from day to day, and from year to year, by love of some kind or another...Reason teaches that a man’s actions are the most proper test and evidence of his love...if we see a man who, by what we behold of the course of his life, seems to follow and imitate Christ, and greatly lay himself out for Christ’s honour and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, reason teaches, that he gives greater evidence of the sincerity and strength of his love to the Saviour than if he only declares that he loves Him, and tells how his heart at such and such a time was drawn out in love to Him, while at the same time he is backward to do any great matter for Christ, or to put himself out of the way for the promotion of his kingdom, and is ready to excuse himself when called to active effort or self-denial for his Saviour’s sake.” pp. 234-236
 Various ways for the exercise of sincere love to God which result in holy practice
 - a. Having a high esteem for God
 - b. Making choice of him above all other things
 - c. Desiring after God
 - d. Delighting in God and finding satisfaction and happiness in Him
3. All true and saving repentance leads to holy practice
“Sorrow for sin is one thing belonging to saving repentance. But sorrow for sin, if it be thorough and sincere, will tend, in practice, to the forsaking of sin.” p. 237
4. All true humility tends to holy practice
“A humble heart tends to an humble behavior. He that is sensible of his own littleness, and nothingness, will be disposed, by a sense of it, to carry himself accordingly both before God and man...to be patient and submissive to {God’s} holy hand under the afflictions he may send, and to be filled with deep reverence toward the Diety, and to treat divine things with the highest respect. It leads also to a meek behavior toward men, making us condescending to inferiors, respectful to superiors, and toward all gentle, peaceful, easy to be entreated, not self-willed, not envious of others, but contented with our own condition, of a calm and quiet spirit, not disposed to resent injuries, but apt to forgive.” p. 238-239
5. All true fear of God tends to holy practice
“The principal thing meant in Scriptures by the fear of God, is a holy solicitude or dread lest we should offend God by sinning against him.” p. 239

Proverbs 8:13

Job 1:8 and 31:23

6. The spirit of thankfulness and praise tends to holy practice
“Sincere thankfulness to God leads us to render again according to the benefits received... though we cannot requite God’s kindness to us by doing anything that is profitable to him, yet

a spirit of thankfulness will dispose us to do what we can, which is well-pleasing or acceptable to him, or which may tend to his declarative glory...And so no man can be truly thankful to God for the dying love of Christ, and for the infinite mercy and love of God toward himself, and yet lead a wicked life.” pp. 240-241

7. Of a Christian weanedness from the world, and of heavenly-mindedness, that they tend to holy practice

“If the heart be taken off from the world, it will tend to take off the pursuits from the world; and if the heart be set on heavenly things, which are not things of the world, it will tend to lead us to pursue the things that are heavenly.” p. 241

8. Of the spirit of Christian love to men, that this also tends to holy practice

“If the spirit of love to man be sincere, it will tend to the practice and deeds of love... Experience shews, that those who cherish a sincere love toward others, are ready both to do and suffer for them.” p. 242

1 John 3:16-19*

James 2:15-16

9. To a true and gracious hope, that this also tends to a holy practice

“But a true hope, so far from hardening men in sin, and making them careless of their duty, tends to stir them up to holiness of life, to awaken them to duty, and to make them more careful to avoid sin, and more diligent in serving God...A gracious hope has this tendency, from the nature of the happiness hoped for, which is a holy happiness; a happiness that the more a man seeks and hopes for, the more he is quickened and enlivened in the disposition to be holy.” p. 243

1 John 3:3

True and saving faith, love for God, repentance, humility, fear of God, thankfulness and praise, heavenly-mindedness, Christian love to men and hope all lead us toward holy practice. In what ways can we participate in the fostering of these things? What entices us away from these things?

APPLICATION

1. We may see one main reason why Christian practice and good works are so abundantly insisted on in the Scriptures as an evidence of sincerity in grace

Matthew 7:15-20

John 14:21-24

Ephesians 5:5-6

Galatians 5:24

Romans 8:13

“God would have it deeply impressed on all, that good works are the only satisfying evidence that we are truly possessed of grace in the soul. It is by our practice that God judges us here on earth, and it is by our practice that he will judge us all at the great and final day.” p. 245

How has Edwards laid the foundation for this statement without pointing us to a works righteousness?

2. In view of this subject, let all examine themselves, whether their grace is real or sincere

*“But here even some truly godly persons may be ready to say, that if they judge themselves by their practice, they must condemn themselves, for they fail so much and so frequently, and are so often wandering out of the way, that at times it scarcely seems that they can be children of God. But to such I answer, that persons who try themselves by their practice, may find that they greatly fail every day, and are often wandering out of the way, and yet they may really see no just cause in their practice to condemn themselves. For when we speak of a life of Christian practice, and when the Scriptures speak of the course of life as Christian, the meaning is not, that the life is a perfect and sinless life; on the contrary, **a Christian’s life may be attended with many and exceeding great imperfections, and yet be a holy life, or a truly Christian life**...whatever your imperfections and failings may be, examine yourself whether you find the following evidences of your grace being of that kind which tends to holy practice.” p. 246*

- a. Has your supposed grace such influence as to render those things in which you have failed of holy practice, loathsome, grievous, and humbling to you?
- b. Do you carry about with you, habitually, a dread of sin... And do you dread it because in itself it is evil, and so hurtful to your own soul, and offensive to God?
- c. Are you sensible of the beauty and pleasantness of the ways of holy practice?
- d. Do you find that you do particularly esteem and delight in those practices that may, by way of eminence, be called Christian practices, in distinction from mere worldly morality?
- e. Do you hunger and thirst after a holy practice?... Do you long to live a holy life, to be conformed to God, to have your conduct, day by day, better regulated, and more spiritual, more to God’s glory, and more such as becometh a Christian?
- f. Do you make a business of endeavouring to live holily, and as God would have you, in all respects?
- g. Do you greatly desire that you may know all that is your duty?

*“If you can honestly meet these tests, then you have the evidence that your grace is of the kind that tends to holy practice, and to growth in it. **And though you may fall, through God’s mercy you shall rise again. He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. Though you may be at times faint, yet, if pursuing, you shall be borne from strength to strength, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.**”*

How can we come alongside one another in prayer that we would see holy practice increase in our lives?