

1 Corinthians 13:6: *Charity . . . rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.* (Part One of Two)

(Sermon to the saints at Westboro Baptist Church on August 12, 2018)

Welcome one and all to this meeting of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in Topeka, Kansas. I was telling some friends from Miami University in Ohio recently that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole, legitimate, moral authority in the earth, and in that role they are compelled to tell the truth to their neighbors about life, death, and eternity as is revealed in the Bible. Today, we earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints (**Jude 3**), from the following foundation: This is “*the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*” (**1 Timothy 3:15**). This body’s job description, by the grace, mercy and power of God Almighty, is to hold forth the truth to be seen and read by all. Gill says of this expression, “*pillar and ground of the truth,*” in **1 Timothy 3:15**, that it “may be best of all to understand it of Christ as incarnate, the great mystery of godliness; who as he is the ground and foundation of the church, and all believers, so he is the foundation of all true doctrine.”

The doctrine for today’s sermon taken from such places as **1 Corinthians 13:6** is: **That all true Christian grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life.** This doctrine is not found, expounded, and practiced anywhere but in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Modern day so-called Christianity rejects this belief and practice; as does false religion generally.

Our Lord Jesus Christ and all those who follow him are experts on charity. The Bible teaches true Christians what charity is from such places as **1 Corinthians 13:1-8**: “*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. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.*” Charity is the sum of all true and saving grace.

Each of these verses, and expressions in 1 Corinthians 13 are worthy of separate sermons, and by the grace, mercy and power of God I hope to deliver those in the future to you. I start this series with verse 6, where it is as if the Holy Spirit, through that “*servant of Jesus, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God*” (**Romans 1:1**), had said that charity is contrary to everything in the life and practice that is evil and tends to everything that is good, to wit: “*Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*” (1 Corinthians 13:6).

By “*iniquity*,” it seems intended here everything that is sinful in the life and practice; and by “*the truth*,” everything that is good in the life, or all that is included in Christian and holy practice. “*Truth*” is variously used in the Bible. Sometimes it means the true doctrines of religion; sometimes the knowledge of those doctrines; sometimes veracity or faithfulness; and sometimes it signifies all virtue and holiness, including the knowledge and reception of all the great truths of the Scriptures, and conformity in these in the life and conduct. I suggest to you that it is this last sense that the word is used here, as used by “*that disciple whom Jesus loved*” (**John 21:7**) at **3 John 3**: “*I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.*”

Today’s doctrine, **that all true Christian grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life**, is contained in 1 Corinthians 13:6, first negatively, when it proposes that Charity is opposed to all wickedness, or evil practice; and positively, that it tends to all righteousness, or holy practice. If any have the notion of grace, that it is something put into the heart, there to be confined and dormant, and that its influence does not govern the Christian throughout as an active being — or if they suppose that the change made by grace, though it indeed betters the heart itself, yet has no tendency to a corresponding improvement of the outward life — they have a very wrong notion. Here I begin my arguments from the Bible in support of this doctrine.

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

Holy practice is not the ground and reason of election, as is supposed by the Arminians, who imagine that God elects men to everlasting life upon a foresight of their good works; but it is the aim and end of election. God does not elect men because he foresees they will be holy, but that he may make them, and that they may be holy. Thus, in election, God ordained that men should walk in good works, as says the apostle, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ*

Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). And again it is said, that the elect are chosen to this very end — "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love" (**Ephesians 1:4**). And so Christ tells his disciples, "*I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*" (**John 15:16**). Now God's eternal election is the first ground of the gift of saving grace. And some have such saving grace, and others do not have it, because some are from eternity chosen of God, and others are not chosen. (See e.g., **Romans 9:1-24**). And seeing that holy practice is the scope and aim of that which is the first ground of the gift of grace, this same holy practice is doubtless the tendency of grace itself. Otherwise it would follow, that God makes use of a certain means to attain an end, which is not fitted to attain that end, and has no tendency to it. That proposition, as my good friend from England would say, is rubbish!

That redemption, by which grace is purchased, is to the same end: holy practice.

Redemption made by Christ is the next ground of the gift 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**). And Christ thus redeemed the elect, and purchased grace for them, to the end that they might walk in holy practice. He has reconciled them to God by his death, to save them from wicked works, that they might be holy and unblameable in their lives, says the apostle — "*And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight*" (**Colossians 1:21, 22**). When the angel appeared to Joseph, he told him that the child that should be born of Mary should be called Jesus, that is, Savior, because he should save his people from their sins (**Matthew 1:21**). And holiness of life is declared to be the end of redemption, when it is said of Christ, that he "*gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*" (**Titus 2:14**). And so we are told that Christ "*died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again*" (**2 Corinthians 5:15**). And for this end, he is said to have "*offered himself,*" "*through the eternal Spirit,*" "*without spot to God,*" that his blood "*might purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God*" (**Hebrews 9:14**).

The most remarkable type of the work of redemption by divine love in all the Old Testament history was the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt. But the holy living of his people was the end God had in view in that redemption, as he often signified to Pharaoh, when from time to time he said to him by Moses and Aaron, "*Let my people go, that they may serve me.*" (**Exodus 7:16, 8:1, 8:20, 9:1, 9:13, and 10:3**). And we have a like expression concerning Christ's redemption in the New Testament, where it is said, "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,.... to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life*" (**Luke 1:68-75**). All these things make it very plain that the end of redemption is that we might be holy.

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

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 (**Psalm 110:3**), to the end that they might exercise themselves in holy practice. "*We are his workmanship,*" says the apostle, "*created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*" (**Ephesians 2:10**). And the apostle tells the Christian Thessalonians, that God had not called them unto uncleanness, but unto holiness (**1 Thessalonians. 4:7**). And the context is important to help you with the working definition of "uncleanness," to wit: "*Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness.*" (**1 Thessalonians 4:1-7**). And again it is written, "*As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation*" or manner of life (**1 Peter 1:15**).

That spiritual knowledge and understanding which are the inward results/fruits of all true grace in the heart, tend to holy practice.

A true knowledge of God and divine things is a practical knowledge. As to a mere speculative knowledge of the things of religion, many wicked men have attained to great measures of it. Men may possess vast learning, and their learning may consist very much of their knowledge in divinity, and of the Bible, and of the things pertaining to religion, and they may be able to reason very strongly about the attributes of God and the doctrines of Christianity, and yet herein their knowledge fails of being a saving knowledge, that it is only speculative and not practical. He that has a right and saving acquaintance with divine things sees the excellence of holiness, and of all the ways of holiness, for he sees the beauty and excellence of God, which consist in his holiness. (See, e.g., **Psalm 110:3**: “*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth;*” **Psalm 29:2**: “*Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness;*” and, **1 Peter 1:16**: “*Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy*” (**Leviticus 19:2**)). And, for the same reason, he sees the hatefulfulness of sin, and of all the ways of sin. And if a man knows the hatefulfulness of the ways of sin (**Romans 7:13**), 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.

He that knows God sees that he is worthy to be obeyed. Pharaoh did not see why he should obey God, because he did not know who he was, and therefore he says — “*Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go*” (**Exodus 5:2**). This is signified to be the reason why wicked men work or practice iniquity, that they have no spiritual knowledge, as says the Psalmist — “*Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord*” (**Psalm 14:4**). And when God would describe the true knowledge of himself to the people of Israel, he does it by this fruit of it, that it led to holy practice — “*He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him. Was not this to know me? saith the Lord*” (**Jeremiah 22:16**). And so the apostle John informs us that the keeping of Christ's commands is an infallible fruit of our knowing him; and he paints him as a gross hypocrite and liar who pretends that he knows Christ, and does not keep his commandments (**1 John 2:3-4**: “*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*”). If a man has spiritual knowledge and understanding, it tends to make him to be of an excellent spirit.

"A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit" (**Proverbs 17:27**). And such an excellent spirit will lead to a corresponding behavior.

From the more immediate consideration of the principles—basic truths, laws and assumptions--of grace itself, it is clear that the tendency of all Christian grace is to practice holiness

First, it appears that all true Christian grace tends to practice, because the faculty—the inherent power or ability of the mind of man-- which is the immediate seat of grace is the faculty of the will, which is the faculty that commands all a man's actions and practice. The immediate seat of grace is in the will or disposition. And this shows that all true grace tends to practice; for there is not one of man's acts that can properly be said to belong to or to be any part of his practice, in any respect but that it is at the command of the will. When we speak of a man's practice, we have respect to those things that he does as a free and voluntary agent, or, which is the same thing, to those things that he does by an act of his will; so that the whole of a man's practice is directed by the faculty of the will. All the decision making powers of the man, whether of body or mind, are subject to the faculty of the will by the constitution of Him who hath made man and who is the great author of our being. The will is the fountain of the practice, as truly as the head of a spring is the fountain of the stream that flows from it. And, therefore, if a principle of true grace be seated in this faculty, it must necessarily tend to practice; as much as the flowing of water in the fountain tends to its flowing in the stream.

Second, it is the definition of grace, that it is a principle of holy action. What is grace but a principle of holiness, or a holy principle in the heart? But the word "*principle*" is relative to something, of which it is a principle. And if grace be a principle, what is it a principle of, but of action? Principles and actions are correlates that necessarily have respect one to the other. Thus, the very idea of a principle of life is a principle that acts in the life. And so, when we speak of a principle of understanding, we mean a principle whence flow acts of understanding. And so by a principle of sin is meant a principle whence flow acts of sin. And, in the same manner, when we speak of a principle of grace, we mean a principle whence flow acts of grace, or gracious actions. A principle of grace has as much a relation to practice as a root has to the plant that it is the root of. If there be a root, it is the root of something; either the root of something that actually grows from it, or that tends to bring forth some plant. It is absurd to speak of a root that is the root of nothing; and so it is absurd to speak of a principle of

grace that does not tend to grace in the practice. **Matthew 7:17-18**: “*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*” **Matthew 3:10**: “*The axe is laid unto the root of the trees.*”

Third, one more thing, by which that which is real and substantial is distinguished from that which is only a shadow or appearance, is, *that it is effectual*. A shadow or picture of a man, though it be ever so distinct or well drawn, or give ever so lively a representation, and though it be the picture of a very strong man, can do nothing. There is nothing accomplished and brought to pass by it, because it is not real, but only a shadow or image. The substance, or reality, however, is something that is effectual. And so it is with what is in the heart of man. That which is only an appearance or image of grace, though it looks like grace, is not effectual, because it wants reality and substance. But that which is real and substantial is effectual, and does indeed bring something to pass in the life. In other words, it acts itself out in practice.

Fourth, the nature of a principle of grace *is to be a principle of life, or a vital principle*. This we are everywhere taught in the Scriptures. There, natural men, who have no principle of grace in the heart, are represented as dead men, while those that have grace are represented as being alive, or having the principle of life in them. E.G.: **Ephesians 2:1**: “*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*” But it is the nature of a principle of life to be a principle of action and operation. A dead man does not act, or move, or bring anything to pass; but in living persons, the life appears by a continued course of action from day to day. They move, and walk, and work, and fill up their time with actions that are the fruits of life.

Fifth, true Christian grace is not only a principle of life, *but an exceedingly powerful principle*. Hence we read of “*the power of godliness,*” as in **2 Timothy 3:5**; and are taught that there is in it a divine power, such as was wrought in Christ when he was raised from the dead. And Peter says: “*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption*

that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:1-4). But the more powerful any principle is, the more effectual it is to produce those operations and that practice to which it tends.

Next time, I hope to expound further on this doctrine **that all true Christian grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life**, by detailing how the very nature and attributes of the fruits of true Christian grace manifest themselves in holy practice. For example I will show this with respect to a true and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle describes a saving faith as a "*faith that worketh by love*" (**Galatians 5:6**). And the apostle James tells us, "*A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works*" (**James 2:18**).

Finally these verses from Romans Chapter 2 apply to all: "*Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.*" **Romans 2:4-11**. I love you. Amen.