

That There Is an Appearance of Love in Them, Is No Sign

by Jonathan Edwards

The sermon emphasizes that an outward appearance of love in religious affections does not guarantee true saving grace, highlighting the prevalence of counterfeits in Christian virtues.

Scripture: Matthew 24:12, Galatians 4:11, Ephesians 6:24

Topics: "False Conversion", "Saving Grace"

Description

Jonathan Edwards discusses the misconception that religious affections, particularly love, are always evidence of salvation, emphasizing that even strong and apparent love for God and Christ may not indicate true saving grace. He points out that Satan can counterfeit love and that there are many false displays of Christian virtues like love and humility. Edwards highlights the importance of genuine, pure, and spiritual love to God and others, as counterfeits of these virtues are common and can lead to a false sense of security in one's faith.

Transcript

VI. It is no evidence that religious affections are saving, or that they are otherwise, that there is an appearance of love in them.

There are no professing Christians who pretend, that this is an argument against the truth and saving nature of religious affections. But, on the other hand, there are some who suppose, it is a good evidence that affections are from the sanctifying and saving influences of the Holy Ghost.--Their argument is that Satan cannot love; this affection being directly contrary to the devil, whose very nature is enmity and malice. And it is true, that nothing is more excellent, heavenly, and divine, than a spirit of true Christian love to God and men: it is more excellent than knowledge, or prophecy, or miracles, or speaking with the tongue of men and angels. It is the chief of the graces of God's Spirit, and the life, essence and sum of all true religion; and that by which we are most conformed to heaven, and most contrary to hell and the devil. But yet it is in arguing from hence, that there are no counterfeits of it. It may be observed that the more excellent anything is, the more will be the counterfeits of it. Thus there are many more counterfeits of silver and gold, than of iron and copper: there are many false diamonds and rubies, but who goes about to counterfeit common stones? Though the more excellent things are, the more difficult it is to make anything that shall be like them, in their essential nature and internal virtues; yet the more manifold will the

counterfeits be, and the more will art and subtlety be displayed, in an exact imitation of the outward appearance. Thus there is the greatest danger of being cheated in buying of medicines that are most excellent and sovereign, though it be most difficult to imitate them with anything of the like value and virtue, and their counterfeits are good for nothing when we have them. So it is with Christian virtues and graces; the subtlety of Satan, and men's deceitful hearts, are wont chiefly to be exercised in counterfeiting those that are in highest repute. So there are perhaps no graces that have more counterfeits than love and humility; these being virtues wherein the beauty of a true Christian does especially appear.

But with respect to love; it is plain by the Scripture, that persons may have a kind of religious love, and yet have no saving grace. Christ speaks of many professing Christians that have such love, whose love will not continue, and so shall fail of salvation, Matt. 24:12, 13: "And because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Which latter words plainly show, that those spoken of before, whose love shall not endure to the end, but wax cold, should not be saved.

Persons may seem to have love to God and Christ, yea, to have very strong and violent affections of this nature, and yet have no grace. For this was evidently the case with many graceless Jews, such as cried Jesus up so high, following him day and night, without meat, drink, or sleep; such as said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," and cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David." [19]

The apostle seems to intimate, that there were many in his days who had a counterfeit love to Christ, in Eph. 6:24: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." The last word, in the original, signifies incorruption; which shows, that the apostle was sensible that there were many who had a kind of love to Christ, whose love was not pure and spiritual.

So also Christian love to the people of God may be counterfeited. It is evident by the Scripture, that there may be strong affections of this kind, without saving grace; as there were in the Galatians towards the Apostle Paul, when they were ready to pluck out their eyes and give them to him; although the apostle expresses his fear that their affections were come to nothing, and that he had bestowed upon them labor in vain, Gal. 4:11, 15.

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