

# They Have Beautiful Symmetry and Proportion.

by Jonathan Edwards

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*True gracious affections are characterized by symmetry and proportion, while false affections are often monstrous and disproportionate.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:4, Mark 6:34, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:22, 1 John 2:6

**Topics:** "True Sanctification", "Holy Affections"

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## Description

Jonathan Edwards preaches about the distinction between truly gracious and holy affections versus false ones, emphasizing the beautiful symmetry and proportion found in the sanctification of believers. He highlights how the saints, having the image of Christ upon them, exhibit a harmonious balance in their various graces and affections, unlike the disproportionate and inconsistent affections of hypocrites. Edwards also discusses the importance of genuine sorrow and mourning for sin in the lives of true saints, contrasting it with the lack of uniformity and essential deficiencies in the religious affections of hypocrites.

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## Transcript

X. Another thing wherein those affections that are truly gracious and holy, differ from those that are false, is beautiful symmetry and proportion.

Not that the symmetry of the virtues, and gracious affections of the saints, in this life is perfect: it oftentimes is in many things defective, through the imperfection of grace, for want of proper instructions, through errors in judgment, or some particular unhappiness of natural temper, or defects in education, and many other disadvantages that might be mentioned. But yet there is, in no wise, that monstrous disproportion in gracious affections, and the various parts of true religion in the saints, that is very commonly to be observed, in the false religion, and counterfeit graces, of hypocrites.

In the truly holy affections of the saints is found that proportion, which is the natural consequence of the universality of their sanctification. They have the whole image of Christ upon them: they have put off the old man, and have put on the new man entire in all its parts and members. It hath pleased the Father that in Christ all fullness should dwell: there is in him every grace; he is full of grace and truth: and they that are Christ's, do, "of his fullness receive grace for grace" (John 1:14, 16); i.e., there is every grace in them which is in Christ; grace for grace; that is, grace answerable to grace: there is no grace in Christ, but there is its image in believers to answer it: the image is a true image; and there is something of the same beautiful proportion in the image, which is in the original; there is feature for feature, and member for member. There is symmetry and beauty in God's workmanship. The natural body, which God hath made,

consists of many members; and all are in a beautiful proportion: so it is in the new man, consisting of various graces and affections. The body of one that was born a perfect child, may fail of exact proportion through distemper, and the weakness and wounds of some of its members; yet the disproportion is in no measure like that of those that are born monsters.

It is with hypocrites, as it was with Ephraim of old, at a time when God greatly complains of their hypocrisy, Hos. 7:8: "Ephraim is a cake not turned," half roasted and half raw: there is commonly no manner of uniformity in their affections.

There is in many of them great partiality with regard to the several kinds of religious affections; great affections in some things, and no manner of proportion in others. A holy hope and holy fear go together in the saints, as has been observed from Psal. 33:18, and 147:11. But in some of these is the most confident hope, while they are void of reverence, self-jealousy and caution, to a great degree cast off fear. In the saints, joy and holy fear go together, though the joy be never so great: as it was with the disciples, in that joyful morning of Christ's resurrection, Matt. 28:8: "And they departed quickly from the sepulcher, with fear and great joy." [69] But many of these rejoice without trembling: their joy is of that sort, that it is truly opposite to godly fear.

But particularly one great difference between saints and hypocrites is this, that the joy and comfort of the former is attended with godly sorrow and mourning for sin. They have not only sorrow to prepare them for their first comfort, but after they are comforted, and their joy established. As it is foretold of the church of God, that they should mourn and loathe themselves for their sins, after they were returned from the captivity, and were settled in the land of Canaan, the land of rest, and the land that flows with milk and honey, Ezek. 20:42, 43: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed." As also in Ezek. 16:61, 62, 63. A true saint is like a little child in this respect; he never had any godly sorrow before he was born again; but since has it often in exercise: as a little child, before it is born, and while it remains in darkness, never cries; but as soon as it sees the light, it begins to cry; and thenceforward is often crying. Although Christ hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, so that we are freed from the sorrow of punishment, and may now sweetly feed upon the comforts Christ hath purchased for us; yet that hinders not but that our feeding on these comforts should be attended with the sorrow of repentance. As of old, the children of Israel were commanded, evermore to feed upon the paschal lamb, with bitter herbs. True saints are spoken of in Scripture, not only as those that have mourned for sin, but as those that do mourn, whose manner it is still to mourn: Matt. 5:4, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

Not only is there often in hypocrites an essential deficiency as to the various kinds of religious affections, but also a strange partiality and disproportion, in the same affections, with regard to different objects.

Thus, as to the affection of love, some make high pretenses, and a great show of love to God and Christ, and it may be, have been greatly affected with what they have heard or thought concerning them: but they have not a spirit of love and benevolence towards men, but are disposed to contention, envy, revenge, and evil speaking; and will, it may be, suffer an old grudge to rest in their bosoms towards a neighbor, for seven years together, if not twice seven years; living in real ill will and bitterness of spirit towards him: and it may be in their dealings with their neighbors, are not very strict and conscientious in observing the rule of "doing to others as they would that they should do to them." And, on the other hand, there are others

that appear as if they had a great deal of benevolence to men, are very good natured and generous in their way, but have no love to God.

And as to love to men, there are some that have flowing affections to some; but their love is far from being of so extensive and universal a nature, as a truly Christian love is. They are full of dear affections to some, and full of bitterness towards others. They are knit to their own party, them that approve of them, love them and admire them; but are fierce against those that oppose and dislike them. Matt. 5:45, 46, "Be like your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil, and on the good. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" Some show a great affection to their neighbors, and pretend to be ravished with the company of the children of God abroad; and at the same time are uncomfortable and churlish towards their wives and other near relations at home, and are very negligent of relative duties. And as to the great love to sinners and opposers of religion, and the great concern for their souls, that there is an appearance of in some, even to extreme distress and agony, singling out a particular person, from among a multitude, for its object, there being at the same time no general compassion to sinners, that are in equally miserable circumstances, but what is in a monstrous disproportion; this seems not to be of the nature of gracious affection. Not that I suppose it to be at all strange, that pity to the perishing souls of sinners should be to a degree of agony; if other things are answerable: or that a truly gracious compassion to souls should be exercised much more to some persons than others that are equally miserable, especially on some particular occasions: there may many things happen to fix the mind, and affect the heart, with respect to a particular person, at such a juncture; and without doubt some saints have been in great distress for the souls of particular persons, so as to be as it were in travail for them; but when persons appear, at particular times, in racking agonies for the soul of some single person, far beyond what has been usually heard or read of in eminent saints, but appear to be persons that have a spirit of meek and fervent love, charity, and compassion to mankind in general, in a far less degree than they: I say, such agonies are greatly to be suspected, for reasons already given; viz., that the Spirit of God is wont to give graces and gracious affections in a beautiful symmetry and proportion.

And as there is a monstrous disproportion in the love of some, in its exercises towards different persons, so there is in their seeming exercises of love towards the same persons.--Some men show a love to others as to their outward man, they are liberal of their worldly substance, and often give to the poor; but have no love to, or concern for the souls of men. Others pretend a great love to men's souls, that are not compassionate and charitable towards their bodies. The making a great show of love, pity and distress for souls, costs them nothing; but in order to show mercy to men's bodies, they must part with money out of their pockets. But a true Christian love to our brethren extends both to their souls and bodies; and herein is like the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. He showed mercy to men's souls, by laboring for them, in preaching the gospel to them; and showed mercy to their bodies in going about doing good, healing all manner of sickness and diseases among the people. We have a remarkable instance of Christ's having compassion at once both to men's souls and bodies, and showing compassion by feeding both, in Mark 6:34, &c.: "And Jesus when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." Here was his compassion to their souls. And in the sequel we have an account of his compassion to their bodies, because they had been a long while having nothing to eat; he fed five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes. And if the compassion of professing Christians towards others does not work in the same ways, it is a sign that it is no true Christian compassion.

And furthermore, it is a sign that affections are not of the right sort, if persons seem to be much affected with the bad qualities of their fellow Christians as the coldness and lifelessness of other saints, but are in no proportion affected with their own defects and corruptions. A true Christian may be affected with the coldness and unsavoriness of other saints, and may mourn much over it: but at the same time, he is not so apt to be affected with the badness of anybody's heart, as his own; this is most in his view; this he is most quicksighted to discern; this he sees most of the aggravations of, and is most ready to lament. And a less degree of virtue will bring him to pity himself, and be concerned at his own calamities, than rightly to be affected with others' calamities. And if men have not attained to the less, we may determine they never attained to the greater.

And here by the way, I would observe, that it may be laid down as a general rule, that if persons pretend that they come to high attainments in religion, but have never yet arrived to the less attainments, it is a sign of a vain pretense. As if persons pretend, that they have got beyond mere morality, to live a spiritual and divine life; but really have not come to be so much as moral persons: or pretend to be greatly affected with the wickedness of their hearts, and are not affected with the palpable violations of God's commands in their practice, which is a less attainment: or if they pretend to be brought to be even willing to be damned for the glory of God, but have no forwardness to suffer a little in their estates and names, and worldly convenience, for the sake of their duty: or pretend that they are not afraid to venture their souls upon Christ, and commit their all to God, trusting to his bare word, and the faithfulness of his promises, for their eternal welfare; but at the same time, have not confidence enough in God, to dare to trust him with a little of their estates, bestowed to pious and charitable uses; I say, when it is thus with persons, their pretenses are manifestly vain. He that is in a journey, and imagines he has got far beyond such a place in his road, and never yet came to it, must be mistaken; and he is not yet arrived to the top of the hill, that never yet got half way thither. But this by the way.

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