

Truly Gracious Affections Arise From Divine Influences and Operations on the Heart

by Jonathan Edwards

The sermon emphasizes that truly gracious affections stem from divine influences and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers.

Scripture: Romans 8:6, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Galatians 6:1, Colossians 1:9, James 3:17

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

Jonathan Edwards delves into the distinction between spiritual affections that arise from supernatural and divine influences on the heart, and those that do not. He explains that true saints, sanctified by the Spirit of God, are referred to as spiritual persons in the New Testament, contrasting them with natural and carnal men. The term 'spiritual' in the Bible signifies a relation to the Holy Spirit and His influences, indicating those who are sanctified and gracious, born of the Spirit and indwelt by Him.

Transcript

I. Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious, do arise from those influences and operations on the heart, which are spiritual, supernatural and divine.

I will explain what I mean by these terms, whence will appear their use to distinguish between those affections which are spiritual, and those which are not so.

We find that true saints, or those persons who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, are in the New Testament called spiritual persons. And their being spiritual is spoken of as their peculiar character, and that wherein they are distinguished from those who are not sanctified. This is evident, because those who are spiritual are set in opposition to natural men, and carnal men. Thus the spiritual man and the natural man are set in opposition one to another, 1 Cor. 2:14, 15: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." The Scripture explains itself to mean an ungodly man, or one that has no grace, by a natural man: thus the Apostle Jude, speaking of certain ungodly men, that had crept in unawares among the saints, ver. 4, of his epistle, says, 5:19, "These are sensual, having not the Spirit." This the apostle gives as a reason why they behaved themselves in such a wicked manner as he had described. Here the word translated sensual, is the very same as that which in those verses in 1 Cor. chap. 2 is translated natural. In the like manner, in the continuation of the same discourse, in the next

verse but one, spiritual men are opposed to carnal men; which the connection plainly shows mean the same, as spiritual men and natural men, in the foregoing verses; "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you, as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal;" i.e., as in a great measure unsanctified. That by carnal the apostle means corrupt and unsanctified, is abundantly evident, by Rom. 7:25, and 8:1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 19, 13, Gal. 5:16, to the end, Col. 2:18. Now therefore, if by natural and carnal in these texts, be intended unsanctified, then doubtless by spiritual, which is opposed thereto, is meant sanctified and gracious.

And as the saints are called spiritual in Scripture, so we also find that there are certain properties, qualities, and principles, that have the same epithet given them. So we read of a "spiritual mind," Rom. 8:6, 7, and of "spiritual wisdom," Col. 1:9, and of "spiritual blessings," Eph. 1:3.

Now it may be observed, that the epithet spiritual, in these and other parallel texts of the New Testament, is not used to signify any relation of persons or things to the spirit or soul of man, as the spiritual part of man, in opposition to the body, which is the material part. Qualities are not said to be spiritual, because they have their seat in the soul, and not in the body: for there are some properties that the Scripture calls carnal or fleshly, which have their seat as much in the soul, as those properties that are called spiritual. Thus it is with pride and self-righteousness, and a man's trusting to his own wisdom, which the apostle calls fleshly, Col. 2:18. Nor are things called spiritual, because they are conversant about those things that are immaterial, and not corporeal. For so was the wisdom of the wise men, and princes of this world, conversant about spirits, and immaterial beings; which yet the apostle speaks of as natural men, totally ignorant of those things that are spiritual, 1 Cor. chap. 2. But it is with relation to the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, that persons or things are termed spiritual in the New Testament. Spirit, as the word is used to signify the third person in the Trinity, is the substantive, of which is formed the adjective spiritual, in the holy Scriptures. Thus Christians are called spiritual persons, because they are born of the Spirit, and because of the indwelling and holy influences of the Spirit of God in them. And things are called spiritual as related to the Spirit of God; 1 Cor. 2:13, 14, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Here the apostle himself expressly signifies, that by spiritual things, he means the things of the Spirit of God, and things which the Holy Ghost teacheth. The same is yet more abundantly apparent by viewing the whole context. Again, Rom. 8:6, "To be carnally minded, is death; to be spiritually minded, is life and peace" The apostle explains what he means by being carnally and spiritually minded in what follows in the 9th verse, and shows that by being spiritually minded, he means a having the indwelling and holy influences of the Spirit of God in the heart: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, it so be the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The same is evident by all the context. But time would fail to produce all the evidence there is of this, in the New Testament.

And it must be here observed, that although it is with relation to the Spirit of God and his influences, that persons and things are called spiritual; yet not all those persons who are subject to any kind of influence of the Spirit of God, are ordinarily called spiritual in the New Testament. They who have only the common influences of God's Spirit, are not so called, in the places cited above, but only those who have the special, gracious, and saving influences of God's Spirit; as is evident, because it has been already proved, that by spiritual men is meant godly men, in opposition to natural, carnal, and unsanctified men. And it is most plain, that the apostle by spiritually minded, Rom. 8:6, means graciously minded. And though the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which natural men might have, are sometimes called spiritual, because they are from the Spirit; yet natural men, whatever gifts of the Spirit they had, were not, in the usual

language of the New Testament, called spiritual persons. For it was not by men's having the gifts of the Spirit, but by their having the virtues of the Spirit, that they were called spiritual; as is apparent by Gal. 6:1: "Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." Meekness is one of those virtues which the apostle had just spoken of, in the verses next preceding, showing what are the fruits of the Spirit. Those qualifications are said to be spiritual in the language of the New Testament, which are truly gracious and holy, and peculiar to the saints.

Thus, when we read of spiritual wisdom and understanding (as in Col. 1:9, "We desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"), hereby is intended that wisdom which is gracious, and from the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God. For, doubtless, by spiritual wisdom is meant that which is opposite to what the Scripture calls natural wisdom; as the spiritual man is opposed to the natural man. And therefore spiritual wisdom is doubtless the same with that wisdom which is from above, that the Apostle James speaks of, Jam. 3:17: "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle," &c., for this the apostle opposes to natural wisdom, ver. 15: "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual"--the last word in the original is the same that is translated natural, in 1 Cor. 2:14.

So that although natural men may be the subjects of many influences of the Spirit of God, as is evident by many Scriptures, as Numb. 24:2, 1 Sam. 10:10, and 11:6, and 16:14, 1 Cor. 13:1, 2, 3, Heb. 6:4, 5, 6, and many others; yet they are not, in the sense of the Scripture, spiritual persons; neither are any of those effects, common gifts, qualities, or affections, that are from the influence of the Spirit of God upon them, called spiritual things. The great difference lies in these two things.

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