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WHAT IS LOVE FOR GOD? | *Puritan Selections*

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WILLIAM AMES (1576-1633)

“The virtue whereby we love God as the chief good” has three parts:

1. a desire for union—“God our chief end”;
2. an enjoyment of satisfaction—“The love which is satisfaction (*complacentia*) is that affection by which we approve of all that is in God and rest in his supreme goodness”;
3. the mark of good will—“The love which is good will (*benevolentia*) is the affection which bids us yield ourselves wholly to God.”

THOMAS WATSON (D. 1690)

“It is a holy fire kindled in the affections, whereby a Christian is carried out strongly after God as the supreme Good.”

JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758)

“As to a definition of divine love, things of this nature are not properly capable of a definition. They are better felt than defined. Love is a term as clear in its signification and that does as naturally suggest to the mind the thing signified by it as any other term or terms that we can find out or substitute in its room. But yet there may be a great deal of benefit in descriptions that may be given of this heavenly principle, though they are imperfect. . . .”

Edwards’ definition of Love—“Tis the soul’s relish of the supreme excellency of the divine nature, inclining the heart to God as the chief good.”

Edwards emphasizes specially Ames’ second part—“We are obliged not only to love him with a love of gratitude from benefits received; but true love to God primarily consists in a supreme regard to him for what he is in himself. . . . If God be infinitely excellent in himself, then he is infinitely lovely on that account, or in other words. . . . if we love not God because he is what he is but only because he is profitable to us, in truth we love him not at all.”

“A true love to God must begin with a delight in his holiness and not with a delight in any other attribute; for no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than as . . . it derives its loveliness from this.”