

CHARITY & ITS FRUITS

A Study of 1 Corinthians 13 based on the sermons of Jonathan Edwards

Sermon 5

“Love does not envy...”

1 Corinthians 13:4b

Introduction

“In the preceding part of the verse the Apostle shows the nature and tendency of Christian charity or divine love with respect to evil received from others, and doing good to other. With respect to evil to be received from others charity suffers long, or meekly bears injuries received; with respect to those received by others charity is kind, or freely does good to others. In the remaining part of the verse the Apostle shows the nature of charity with respect to _____ bestowed by others, and good possessed by ourselves; or the good that others have, or that we have.” (125)

Doctrine-“A truly Christian spirit is _____ to an envious spirit.”

“Envy may be defined, a spirit of opposition to others’ comparative _____, or to the happiness of others considered as compared with their own. The thing to which envious persons are opposed is the comparative relation between that state of honor or happiness which others have, or may have, and their own state... There is a disposition naturally in man to love to be uppermost, and this disposition is directly crossed when they see others above them... As men very commonly are, they cannot bear that others should rival them or vie with them in honor and prosperity.” (126)

Envy is seen “in an _____ in seeing others’ prosperity instead of rejoicing in it. It is a trouble to them. It is grievous to their spirits to see them rising so high, and come to such honor and prosperity.” (127)

“And from such a spirit (an envious spirit) they stand ready to rejoice at anything which happens to diminish the honor and comfort of what they have obtained; they would be glad to have them brought low... And it is from this disposition that seeing others’ prosperity often sets persons talking against them and speaking evil of them. They envy them the prosperity or honor they have obtained, and they hope by speaking evil of them in some measure to diminish that honor and to beget a mean opinion in others of them... This opposition to their prosperity appears in a dislike of their persons for it... Persons often have an ill spirit against others for nothing else but their prosperity... They resent their prospering and coming to honor as if they were guilty of some injury to them in it; and sometimes there is a settled _____ in some toward others upon this account.” (128)

Edwards then shows three ways that a Christian spirit is _____ to an envious spirit.

“First... He who is influenced in the course of his life and actions by Christian principles, though he has envy as well as other corruptions in his heart, yet he _____ such a spirit as being very unbecoming of him as a Christian, and contrary to the nature and will of God. He sees it to be an odious spirit; he does not only see the odiousness of it as it is in others, but as it is in him.” (129)

“Second. It (a Christian spirit) _____ such a principle or disposition in the heart.”

“Third. A Christian spirit disposes persons to _____ in others’ prosperity. It not only mortifies a disposition to grieve at it, but on the contrary gives a disposition to rejoice in it.” (129)

Edwards then goes to show three reasons why the Christian spirit is opposed to the spirit of envy.

“First. If we consider how much a spirit and practice which are contrary to a spirit of envy is insisted on in the precepts which Christ hath given. How full is the New Testament of precepts of good will to others, principles of meekness, humility and beneficence, which are all the opposite of a spirit of envy! And how often are we particularly _____ there against envy.” (130)

“Second...The gospel scheme, all of it from beginning to end, tends to the contrary of this spirit. The Christian form of doctrine doth abundantly hold forth those things which _____ against a spirit of envy. The things which they teach us of God are exceedingly contrary to it. For there we are taught how far God was from grudging us the most exceeding honor and blessedness, and how he has grudged us nothing as too much to be done for us, and nothing as too great and too good to be given us; He hath not grudged us His only begotten Son, that which was the most precious and more dear of all to Himself; for what was dearer to God than His only begotten, dearly loved Son? He hath not grudged us the highest honor and blessedness in union with Him.” (131)

“The Christian scheme of doctrine teaches us how Christ came into the world to deliver us from the fruits of Satan’s _____ toward us. The devil being miserable himself envied mankind that happiness which they had, and could not bear to see our first parents in their happy state in Eden, and therefore exerted himself to the utmost to ruin them, and accomplished it. The gospel teaches how Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, and deliver us from that misery into which his envy has brought us.” (131)

Edwards then calls us to examine the _____ of Christ’s life and he asks, “How far was He from a spirit of envy? How contented in His mean and low afflicted circumstances, how far did He appear from envying those who were possessed of worldly wealth and honor?” (131)

“Third. Let it be considered how that love or charity which is the _____ of the Christian spirit, will dispose to yield to the authority of those precepts, and to the influence of those enforcements.” (132)

He then mentions two ways that love leads to not envying. The first of those ways is that “love rejoices at the good...And love to God also has a direct tendency to influence a person to obey His commands. The natural, genuine fruit of love to God is _____; and therefore it will tend to obedience to those commands wherein He forbids envy...And so love to God will dispose to follow God’s example...” (133)

The second is that love leads to humility and humility destroys envy because envy comes from _____. “It is pride that is the great root and source of envy. It is because of the pride of men’s hearts that they have such a disposition to be distinguished and singular in honor and prosperity, and making them so uneasy as seeing others above them.” (133)

Application-Edwards gives two points of application: self-examination and exhortation

Self-examination. “Let this put us all upon examining ourselves with respect to this hateful spirit...” Examine your _____. “When we look back on our past lives, can we not see that a considerable part of our lives has been spent in envying others, and many of our days with envy burning in our hearts towards one another?” Examine yourself presently. “Do you no really at this day carry old envious grudging in your hearts against this and that man, whom you see...?” (135)

Edwards then warns us against trying to _____ our envy. “Men are wont to have various excuses for their envious spirit by which they account themselves justifiable.” (135) We can deceive ourselves by thinking that others “are not worthy of their honor and prosperity which they have; they are not fit for it...It is generally so that when others are promoted to honor, or in any respect come to remarkable prosperity, for others to take that occasion to tell of their faults and crimes, and set forth their unworthiness.” (136)

Exhortation. “So contrary is the spirit of envy to a Christian spirit, so evil in itself and so injurious to others, that it should be disallowed and put away by all, and especially by those who profess to be Christians...The spirit of envy is the very contrary of the spirit of _____, where all rejoice in the happiness of others; and it is the very spirit of hell itself, which is a most hateful spirit, and one that feeds itself on the ruin of the prosperity and happiness of others.” (137)

“Let, then, the consideration of the foolishness, the baseness, the infamy of so wicked a spirit, cause us to abhor it, and to shun its excuses, and earnestly to seek the spirit of Christian love, that excellent spirit of divine charity which will lead us always to rejoice in the _____ of others and which will fill our own hearts with happiness.” (138)