

Sermon XVI-Part II- Jonathan Edwards

“Heaven, A World of Charity or Love”

1 Cor. 13:8-10

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” [KJ]

“Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away”. [ESV]

Edwards has spent the first part of this Sermon 16 describing how heaven will be filled with a perfect holy love, both towards God and one another. He elaborates how the church, imperfect in its earthly form, will achieve a perfected state of love in heaven and also mentions things that will be missing- no enmity, coldness of heart, strife or jealousy. The saints will exhibit perfect mutual love for one another, and perfect wisdom, unity and decency will exist- and all this will last eternally! Edwards will now share thoughts on how this knowledge of heaven should affect our thinking, and how people can be assured of their salvation. He will speak with great directness and bluntness to those who are not yet saved. And then he will give specific encouragement on how to dwell on heaven itself.

How often do you think about heaven? What comes to mind when you do think about it? Why don't we dwell on it more frequently?

DOCTRINE: “HEAVEN IS A WORLD OF CHARITY OR LOVE.”

VI. *Of the blessed effects and fruits of this love, as exercised and enjoyed in these circumstances-*

1. *Charity will cause perfect behavior of all inhabitants of heaven toward God and each other*

“..in heaven this love will be perfect, to the perfect exclusion of all sin consisting in enmity against God and fellow creatures, so the fruit of it will be a most perfect behavior toward all. Hence life in heaven will be without the least sinful failure or error... We know not particularly how the saints in heaven shall be employed; but in general we know that they are employed in praising and serving God; and this they will do perfectly, being influenced by such a love as we have been considering. And we have reason to think that they are so employed as in some way to be subservient, under God, to each other's happiness, for they are represented in the Scriptures as united together in one society, which, it would seem, can be for no other purpose but mutual subserviency and happiness..” [p. 349]

2. *Charity will cause perfect tranquility and joy in heaven*

“Charity, or holy and humble Christian love... banishes all disturbance, and sweetly composes and brings rest to the spirit, and makes all divinely calm and sweet and happy. In that soul where divine love reigns and is in-

lively exercise, nothing can cause a storm, or even gather threatening clouds... where there is perfect harmony among all the inhabitants, no one envying another, but everyone rejoicing in the happiness of every other; where all their love is humble and holy, and perfectly Christian, without the least carnality or impurity; where love is always mutual and reciprocated to the full; where there is no hypocrisy or dissembling, but perfect simplicity and sincerity; where there is no treachery, or unfaithfulness, or inconstancy, or jealousy in any form;

...where there is no clog or hindrance to the exercises or expressions of love, no imprudence or indecency in expressing it, and no influence of folly or indiscretion in any word or deed; where there is no separation wall, and no misunderstanding or strangeness, but full acquaintance and perfect intimacy in all; where there is no division through different opinions or interests, but where all in that glorious and loving society shall be most nearly and divinely related, and each shall belong to every other, and all shall enjoy each other in perfect prosperity and riches, and honor, without any sickness, or grief, or persecution, or sorrow, or any enemy to molest them, or any busybody to create jealousy or misunderstanding, or mar the perfect, and holy, and blessed peace that reigns in heaven!.. What a haven of rest to enter, after having passed through the storms and tempests of this world, in which pride, and selfishness, and envy, and malice, and scorn, and contempt, and contention, and vice, are as waves of a restless ocean, always rolling, and often dashed about in violence and fury!.... Oh! what tranquillity will there be in such a world as this! And who can express the fullness and blessedness of this peace!

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VII. Application

- 1.** *If heaven be such a world as has been described, then we may see a reason why contention and strife tend to darken our evidence of fitness for its possession. [and such strife affects our prayer life]*

..When converted persons get into ill frames in their families, the consequence commonly, if not universally, is, that they live without much of a comfortable sense of heavenly things, or any lively hope of heaven. They do not enjoy much of that spiritual calm and sweetness that those do who live in love and peace. They have not that help from God, and that communion with him, and that near intercourse with heaven in prayer, that others have. The apostle seems to speak of contention in families as having this influence. His language is (1 Pet. 3:7), "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them" (your wives) "according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel; and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Here he intimates that discord in families tends to hinder Christians in their prayers.... For heaven being a world of

love, it follows that, when we have the least exercise of love, and the most of a contrary spirit, then we have the least of heaven, and are farthest from it in the frame of our mind.” [p.353-354]

2. *How happy those are who are entitled to heaven [and what distinguishes them?]*

“..They have a part and interest in this world of love, and have a proper right and title to it, for they are of the number of those of whom it is written (Rev. 22:14), “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” And, doubtless, there are such persons here amongst us... But who are these persons? How shall they be known, and by what marks may they be distinguished?”...[p.355]

a. *They are those that have had the principle or seed of the same love that reigns in heaven implanted in their hearts, in this world, in the work of regeneration.*

“..who have been the subjects of the new birth, or who have been born of the Spirit. A glorious work of the Spirit of God has been wrought in their hearts, renewing them by bringing down from heaven, as it were, some of the light and some of the holy, pure flame that is in that world of love, and giving it place in them. ..”Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible” (1 Pet. 1:23); “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). [p.355]

b. *They are those who have freely chosen the happiness that flows from the exercise and enjoyment of such love as is in heaven, above all other conceivable happiness.*

“..They see and understand so much of this as to know that it is the best good. They do not merely yield that it is so from rational arguments that may be offered for it, and by which they are convinced that it is so, but they know it is so from what little they have tasted of it... Love to God, and love to Christ, and love to saints for God and Christ’s sake, and the enjoyment of the fruits of God’s love in holy communion with God, and Christ, and with holy persons — this is what they have a relish for; and such is their renewed nature...They have chosen this before all things else, and chosen it freely. Their souls go out after it more than after everything else, and their hearts are more eager in pursuit of it... They have chosen it not merely because they have met with sorrow, and are in such low and afflicted circumstances that they do not expect much from the world, but because their hearts were so captivated by this good that they chose it for its own sake before all worldly good, even if they could have ever so much of the latter, and enjoy it ever so long.” [p. 356]

c. *They are those who, from the love that is in them, are in heart and life, in principle and practice, struggling after holiness.*

“..It is a principle that thirsts after growth. It is in imperfection, and in a state of infancy, in this world, and it desires growth. It has much to struggle with... The great strife and struggle of the new man is after holiness. His

heart struggles after it, for he has an interest in heaven, and therefore he struggles with that sin that would keep him from it. He is full of ardent desires, and breathings, and longings, and strivings to be holy. And his hands struggle as well as his heart. He strives in his practice... he desires to be nearer perfection, and more like those who are in heaven. And this is one reason why he longs to be in heaven, that he may be perfectly holy. And the great principle which leads him thus to struggle, is love. It is not only fear; but it is love to God, and love to Christ, and love to holiness." [p.357]

How does Edwards summarize then the main marks of a Christian? Is any of this encouraging or a comfort to you?

3. What has been said on this subject may well awaken and alarm the impenitent

- a.** *By putting them in mind of their misery, in that they have no portion or right in this world of love.*

"You have heard what has been said of heaven..but consider that none of this belongs to you. When you hear of such things, you hear of that in which you have no interest....No such person as you, a wicked hater of God and Christ, and one that is under the power of a spirit of enmity against all that is good, shall ever enter there. Such as you are, never belong to the faithful Israel of God, and shall never enter their heavenly rest... If such a soul as yours should be admitted into heaven, that world of love, how nauseous would it be to those blest spirits whose souls are as a flame of love! and how would it discompose that loving and blessed society, and put everything in confusion! It would make heaven no longer heaven, if such souls should be admitted there. It would change it from a world of love to a world of hatred, and pride, and envy, and malice, and revenge, as this world is! But this shall never be; and the only alternative is, that such as you shall be shut out with "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," (Rev. 22:15); that is, with all that is vile, and unclean, and unholy." [p. 358]

- b.** *By showing them that they are in danger of hell, which is a world of hatred.*

"There are three worlds. One is this, which is an intermediate world — a world in which good and evil are so mixed together as to be a sure sign that this world is not to continue forever. Another is heaven, a world of love, without any hatred. And the other is hell, a world of hatred, where there is no love, which is the world to which all of you who are in a Christless state properly belong. This last is the world where God manifests his displeasure and wrath, as in heaven he manifests his love... It is a world prepared on purpose for the expression of God's wrath. He has made hell for this; and he has no other use for it but there to testify forever his hatred of sin and sinners, where there is no token of love or mercy. There is nothing there but what shows forth the Divine indignation and wrath..."

In hell all those principles will reign and rage that are contrary to love, without any restraining grace to keep them within bounds. Here will be unrestrained pride, and malice, and envy, and revenge, and contention in all its fury and without end, never knowing peace... And there their hatred and envy, and all evil passions, will be a torment to themselves... Now consider, all ye that are out of Christ, and that were never born again, and that never had any blessed renovation of your hearts by the Holy Spirit implanting divine love in them,.. How, then, can you rest in such a state as you are in, and go about so carelessly from day to day, and so heedless and negligent of your precious, immortal souls? Consider seriously these things, and be wise for yourself, before it is too late;.. before the door of hope is closed, and the agonies of the second death shall begin their work, and your eternal doom is sealed!" [p. 359-362]

3. *Let the consideration of what has been said of heaven stir up all earnestly to seek after it.*

"If heaven be such a blessed world, then let it be our chosen country, and the inheritance that we look for and seek... Truly this is an evil world, and so it is like to be. It is in vain for us to expect that it will be any other than a world of sin, a world of pride and enmity and strife, and so a restless world. And though the times may hereafter be mended, yet these things will always be more or less found in the world so long as it stands.. Who, then, would content himself with a portion in such a world? What man, acting wisely and considerately, would concern himself much about laying up in store in such a world as this, and would not rather neglect the world, and let it go to them that would take it, and apply all his heart and strength to lay up treasure in heaven, and to press on to that world of love?" [p. 364-365]

a. *Let not your heart go after the things of this world, as your chief good.*

"..Indulge not yourself in the possession of earthly things as though they were to satisfy your soul. This is the reverse of seeking heaven; it is to go in a way contrary to that which leads to the world of love. If you would seek heaven, your affections must be taken off from the pleasures of the world... You must mortify the desires of vain-glory, and become poor in spirit and lowly in heart." [p.366]

b. *You must, in your meditations and holy exercises, be much engaged in conversing with heavenly persons, and objects, and enjoyments.*

"You cannot constantly be seeking heaven, without having your thoughts much there. Turn, then, the stream of your thoughts and affections towards that world of love, and towards the God of love that dwells there, and toward the saints and angels that are at Christ's right hand... Commune much with God and Christ in prayer, and think often of all that is in heaven, of the friends who are there, and the praises and worship there, and of all that will make up the blessedness of that world of love. "Let your conversation be in heaven." [p. 366]

c.

Be content to pass through all difficulties in the way to heaven.

“That glorious city of light and love is, as it were, on the top of a high hill or mountain, and there is no way to it but by upward and arduous steps...Be willing, then, to undergo the labor, and meet the toil, and overcome the difficulty. What is it all in comparison with the sweet rest that is at your journey’s end? Be willing to cross the natural inclination of flesh and blood, which is downward, and press onward and upward to the prize.”

[p. 35---

d.

In all your way let your eye be fixed on Jesus, who has gone to heaven as your forerunner.

“..Consider how, by patient continuance in well-doing, and by patient endurance of great suffering, he went before you to heaven. Look to him as your mediator, and trust in the atonement which he has made, entering into the holiest of all in the upper temple. Look to him as your intercessor, who forever pleads for you before the throne of God. Look to him as your strength, that by his Spirit he may enable you to press on, and overcome every difficulty of the way...Be willing, then, to undergo the labor, and meet the toil, and overcome the difficulty. What is it all in comparison with the sweet rest that is at your journey’s end?” [p.367]

e.

If you would be in the way to the world of love, see that you live a life of love — of love to God, and love to men.

“Thus, also, you may have a sense of the glory of heavenly things, as of God, and Christ, and holiness; and your heart be disposed and opened by holy love to God, and by the spirit of peace and love to men, to a sense of the excellence and sweetness of all that is to be found in heaven. Thus shall the windows of heaven be as it were opened, so that its glorious light shall shine in upon your soul...Happy, thrice happy those, who shall thus be found faithful to the end, and then shall be welcomed to the joy of their Lord! There “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” [p. 368]

How we can encourage one another better to think heavenly-minded?

