

Charity Thinketh No Evil

Wednesday, December 21, 2022

Mike Miller

Straight Paths Bible Church

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 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.

- I. To “think no evil” means to put the best possible construction on the motives and the conduct of others.
 - A. It means that charity, or that a person under the influence of charity, is not malicious, censorious, disposed to find fault, or to impute improper motives to others.
 - B. It is not only "not easily provoked," but it is not disposed to *think* that there was any evil intention even in cases which might tend to irritate or exasperate us.
 - C. It is not disposed to think that there was any evil in the case; or that what was done was with any improper intention or design;
 - D. That is, it puts the best possible construction on the conduct of others, and supposes, as far as can be done, that it was in consistency with honesty, truth, friendship, and love.
 - E. We desire to think well of the man whom we love; nor will we think ill of his motives, opinions, or conduct, until we are compelled to do so by the most irrefutable evidence.
 - F. The true child of God, therefore, will be prompted by the Spirit of God to charitable judging.
 - G. There is no more striking evidence of the lack of the Spirit of God in a person, than a disposition to impute the worst motives and opinions to others.
 - H. It is also the beginning of the end to any relationship.

- II. Satan has a great advantage over us in this matter.
 - A. Because we have all exercised charity and been betrayed and hurt by it.
 - B. It is so common to be hurt and wronged by others that we are prone to expect it and that becomes the habit of our thinking toward others.
 - C. We think evil before we think good; we think without charity before we can rein our mind in and exercise charity.
 - D. We need to realize that by thinking evil of them we are doing exactly what we are accusing them of doing to us.
 1. We judge their motives and question their love and respect for us, and we begin to feel toward them exactly how we imagine that they are feeling toward us.
 - E. This is self-centered and selfish thinking; it shows that we are primarily concerned with protecting our own feelings and our own interests.
 - F. It is always at the expense of others that we do this, because it is very rare that we think evil of someone and keep it to ourselves; we find it necessary to tell others.

1. This is more evidence of selfishness, because it is intended for nothing else except to win their sympathy and incite contempt for the person we are thinking evil of.

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Proverbs 17:9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

- G. The devil is always present to accuse others to us as if he is looking out for our interests; the devil is always a liar; he is the accuser of the brethren. (Rev. 12:10)
- H. We need to realize that helping us to think evil of others is an important part of Satan's strategy to ruin us, and we need to resist him in this.
- I. We are weak in this matter because we know that there is so much evil around us and that people are very often insincere, and unfaithful, and selfish, and hateful.
- J. We have experienced so much of it that we have formed a mental habit of defaulting to defensive thinking about everything that is said or done by others.
- K. Charity CANNOT do this; if we are under the influence of love we cannot live this way.
- L. This chapter starts out by telling us that without charity absolutely everything else we do is vain and worthless, so it is imperative that we must deal with our evil thinking.

III. We must turn to Jesus as our example in order to understand how we can overcome this fault and weakness in ourselves and overcome it.

1 Peter 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

1 Peter 2:15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

- A. Jesus was certainly thought evil of, but He never thought evil of others like this.
- B. There is a great difference in the sight of God between discerning between good and evil, wise and unwise, etc. and having contempt for others and counting them as evil.
 1. Jesus never did this, even when He condemned the self-righteous with the strongest language.
- C. We are prone to assume there is malice in the actions or words of others toward us and we react in kind, at least in our mind, before we allow it to come out of our mouth.
 1. Others actually did speak to Jesus with malice and their motives toward him were full of malice, but He reacted in love.

Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

- D. He GAVE himself; He LAID DOWN his life.

Philippians 2:7-8 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

- E. See, our trouble in this matter of thinking evil of others is that we have not laid down our lives and humbled ourselves.
- F. We are still concerned about protecting ourselves and our reputation, and our pride.

1 John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

- G. We are too quick to think evil of others or what they are doing.

IV. Then there is the element here of condemning the righteous, which is an abomination in the sight of God.

Proverbs 17:15 He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.

- A. This is a truth that has influenced our civilization for the past 500 years, that we should be considered innocent until proven guilty.
- B. It has been a fundamental part of the civil law we have lived under for all these years, and it is a fundamental principle that guards justice.

"It is better 100 guilty Persons should escape than that one innocent Person should suffer" – Benjamin Franklin

We find, in the rules laid down by the greatest English Judges, who have been the brightest of mankind; We are to look upon it as more beneficial, that many guilty persons should escape unpunished, than one innocent person should suffer. The reason is, because it's of more importance to community, that innocence should be protected, than it is, that guilt should be punished; for guilt and crimes are so frequent in the world, that all of them cannot be punished; and many times they happen in such a manner, that it is not of much consequence to the public, whether they are punished or not. But when innocence itself, is brought to the bar and condemned, especially to die, the subject will exclaim, it is immaterial to me, whether I behave well or ill; for virtue itself, is no security. And if such a sentiment as this, should take place in the mind of the subject, there would be an end to all security what so ever. – John Adams

- C. This kind of thinking came directly from the Scriptures and the fact that charity "thinketh no evil."
- D. The escape of the guilty from justice does far less harm than when an innocent person is condemned.
- E. This is true whether it is in a court of law, or in the heart of a man or woman.
 - 1. And yet most people seem to consider it a mark of spirituality or wisdom to find fault, to be the first to spot the imposter, to have some kind of gift for seeing the evil in others.
 - 2. They consider it much more important to call any sin or infraction out and to make sure it is punished, than to protect an innocent person from being condemned, considering everyone guilty until proven innocent.
 - 3. This was the crowd that crucified the Lord; they were like that, too.
- F. We all know that we have been guilty of this sin in our heart and with our lips, too.
 - 1. We should own our guilt and repent of such an awful and harmful way of thinking, and resolve to stop it and walk in charity toward others.
- G. We know that we have thought evil, and usually spoken evil, of others and later found out that we were wrong in our judgements about what was going on with them in their life and mind.
- H. Did we repent, or ask forgiveness from God, or from them, if we opened our mouth and told others what we were thinking?
- I. Charity "thinketh no evil."

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

- J. Even if we see the evil, and it is true, and meant for us, we should act like Christ did toward us ...

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.