

Sermon X- Jonathan Edwards
“The Spirit of Charity the Opposite of a Censorious Spirit”

1 Cor. 13: 5

“Charity...thinketh no evil.” [KJ] “Love.. does not rejoice at wrongdoing..” [ESV]

DOCTRINE: “That The Spirit Of Charity, Or Christian Love, Is The Opposite Of A Censorious Spirit”.

“It consists of a disposition to think evil of others, or to judge evil of them, with respect to three things: their state, their qualities, their actions.” [p. 205, Charity]

What do you think of when defining a “censorious spirit” in yourself or others?

I. What does a censorious spirit look like?

1. “A forwardness to judge evil of the STATE of others”

“Persons are guilty of censoriousness when...they will condemn others as hypocrites because of God’s providential dealings with them..[see Job]..the same is true when they condemn them for the failings they may see in them, and which are no greater than are often incident in God’s children..for want of making due allowances for their natural temperament, or for their manner or want of education, or other peculiar disadvantages under which they labor-or when they are ready to reject all..unconverted men, because their experiences do not in everything quadrate with their own; setting up themselves, and their experience as a standard and rule to others...(in not allowing any to be Christians who have not their own experiences) ..as if they would not allow any to be men who had not just their own stature, and the same strength, or temperament of body, and the very same features of countenance as themselves.” [p. 206 Charity..]

2. “A forwardness to judge evil of the QUALITIES of others”

“...to overlook their good qualities..to magnify their ill qualities and make more of them than is just... to charge others with ignorance or folly..to entertain a very low and despicable opinion of others..They seem to them to be exceeding proud, or covetous, or selfish, in some way bad..when it may be that to others they seem well...the censorious see only that which is evil, and speak only that which is unjust and disparaging as to the qualities of others”. [p. 208, Charity..]

3.

“A forwardness to judge evil of the ACTIONS of others”

“A suspicious spirit, which leads persons to be jealous of others, and ready to suspect them of being guilty of evil things when they have no evidence of it whatever...being forward to take up and circulate evil reports about them...it is a very common thing for persons to pass a judgment on others, on no better ground or foundation than that they have heard that somebody has said this...though they have no evidence that what is said is true.” [p. 208-209 Charity..]

a. Judging evil when there is no clear evidence

“If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” [Prov. 18:13]

Prov. 17:4 (listening to wicked lips)

Ps. 15: 1-3 (not taking up reproach against your neighbor)

1 Tim. 6:4 (craving slander, dissension, evil suspicions)

b. To look at their actions in the worst light/being happy to judge ill of others/
loving to think of them in the worst possible light

“..it is very common with men, when they are prejudiced against others, to put bad constructions on their actions or words that are seemingly good, as though they were performed in hypocrisy...this is especially true in reference to public offices and affairs”. [p. 210, Charity..]

c.

Can't we judge people who are really acting in an evil manner?

1.

Let appointed judges in courts and churches be the ones to pass judgment and sentence “to approve the good and condemn the bad”.

2.

When there is plain and clear evidence, we can pass judgments

“Christian charity is not a thing founded on the ruins of reason...all judging as to others state, or qualifications, or actions, is not an uncharitable censoriousness.” [p. 212, Charity..]

II.

A censorious spirit is contrary to the spirit of love [charity]

A.**It is contrary to loving our neighbor**

1. We are “backward” to judge evil of ourselves

“If there be anything in them that resembles grace, they are exceeding apt to think their state is good; and so they are ready to think well of their own words and deeds, and very backward to think evil of themselves in any of these respects. And the reason is, they have a great love of themselves. And therefore, if they loved their neighbor as themselves, love would have the same tendency with respect to him”. [p. 213, Charity..]

2. We are “backward” to judge evil of those we love
 - Parents’ view towards children
 - Personal friends

3. Our prejudice towards others affects our judgment

“Where hatred and ill-will towards others most prevail, there a censorious spirit does most prevail also....each is apt to entertain jealousies of what the other may do when absent and out of sight..to listen to evil reports about him..to believe every word of them..to put the worst construction of all that he may say or do. These things shew plainly that it is a want of Christian love to our neighbor..” [p.214-215, Charity..]

B.**A censorious spirit causes a proud spirit**

“If men were humbly sensible of their own failings, they would not be very forward or pleased in judging others, for the censure passed upon others would but rest upon themselves. There are the same kinds of corruption in one man’s heart as in another’s; and if those persons that are most busy in censuring others would look within, and seriously examine their own hearts and lives, they might generally see the same dispositions and behaviour in themselves...which they see and judge in others...” [p. 215, Charity..]

Rom. 2:1-5

Rom. 14:4

C.**Biblical warnings about censoriousness**

1. It strongly reproves those who commonly speak evil of others

Ps. 15:1-3
Ps. 50: 19-20
Titus 3: 1-2
1 Pet. 2:1

2. It warns against thinking evil of fellow believers
“Do not speak evil against one another brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one law-giver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?” [Jam. 4:11, 12]

a. Often things are far better than they first appear once the truth comes out

Joshua 22 (Israel)
1 Kings 19 (Elijah)
1 Sam. 1 (Eli)
2 Sam. 16 (David)

b. few occasions require our passing judgment-
we should be far more concerned with ourselves

“Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart”. [1Cor. 4:5]

c. if we are found to censor others to
condemnation, we shall be condemned
ourselves

“Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured you.” [Matt. 7: 1-2]

III. Application life-on-life

1. Can you think of specific ways you exhibit a censorious spirit

-at home?

-with your colleagues or personal friends?

-within CPC?

2.How does having a censorious spirit affect our relationship with God?

3.What are things we can do to guard against having a censorious spirit?