

Heaven: A World of Love

Text: 1 Corinthians 13

Introduction:

Well, we have come to our midpoint in this series on heaven. We have worked through Heaven, as a place of "rest," a place of "righteousness," and a place of "unspeakable joy." And following this morning, we have three more messages, directed toward addressing this wonderful and glorious topic!

For this morning, we will move on then, to consider heaven, as a place of "love." In fact, the format will be a little different, for this one particular devotional, because I will seek to open up the thoughts and ideas of a famous little booklet, titled, "Heaven, a World of Love," by a well known author, who, sadly, is often only recognized for his tremendous preaching on hell. When we think of the beloved Puritan from New England, Jonathan Edwards, generally, immediately, we think of people clinging to the pews for dear life, as he thundered forth his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God!" But Edwards also preached some of the most glorious and wondrous sermons on heaven, as well! And this morning, I will seek to condense and convey, the general thrust of Edwards preaching, taken from 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, which led to the publishing of the precious, short volume, "Heaven, A World of Love!"

At the very foundation of Edward's message, taken from his main text, lies two critical facts: First, very clearly, even when all of the other gifts of the Spirit listed, cease to exist, including the great virtues of faith and hope (which will no longer be needed in heaven), love will continue on. Love exceeds all gifts. And secondly then, that being the case, love will continue on with the church triumphant, eternally in heaven. Love is a part of the "perfect," which is to come, when the "in part" is done away with. From these two, interconnected assumptions, given in the text, Edward's thoughts on heaven, emerge with great power and glory!

From here then, Edwards moves on to develop six main points, followed by several applications. We will consider a summary explanation of these points, which are as follows: 1) The Great Cause and Fountain of Love that is in Heaven, 2) The Objects of Love that Heaven Contains, 3) The Subjects of that Love, 4) Its Principle, or the Love Itself, 5) The Excellent

Circumstances in which it is there Exercised and Expressed and Enjoyed, and 6) The Happy Effects and Fruits of All this.

I. The Great Cause and Fountain of Love in Heaven

The first, and perhaps most significant point that Edward's makes, affirming heaven to be a "world of love," centers on the fact that God, Himself, dwells in heaven. As the beloved Apostle John affirms, "God is love." That being the case, heaven, the place where God chooses to most manifest His divine presence (remembering, that God is truly everywhere, unable to be contained anywhere), then must be a world of love. What God is, will be most reflected, where His presence is most manifest. And so, even as the Apostle Paul affirms in 1 Corinthians 13, that "love" is the chief virtue, exceeding all virtues, extending into eternity, this would be consistent with the nature of our God, who is love. Indeed, since God is love, then God must be both the cause and source of all holy love, which will fill His people, who will fill heaven!

Listen to a few "heart moving" excerpts from Edward's book, concerning this point:

"For God is the fountain of love, as the sun is the fountain of light. And therefore the glorious presence of God in heaven, fills heaven with love, as the sun, placed in the midst of the visible heavens in a clear day, fills the world with light...There, even in heaven, dwells the God from whom every stream of holy love, yea, every drop that is, or ever was, proceeds. There dwells God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, united as one infinitely dear and incomprehensible and mutual and eternal love...There, in heaven, this infinite fountain of love--this eternal Three in One--is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it, as it flows forever. There this glorious God is manifested, and shines forth, in full gory, in beams of love. And there this glorious fountain forever flows forth in streams, yea, in rivers of love and delight, and these rivers swell, as it were, to an ocean of love, in which the souls of the ransomed may bathe with the sweetest enjoyment, and their hearts, as it were, be deluged with love, and that forever!" (*Heaven a World of Love*, Pgs. 12-13, Calvary Press)

II. The Objects of Love that Heaven Contains

Jonathan Edwards then moves on to his second point, to show "the objects of love that heaven contains." And he reflects on three things, to this end:

1) There are none but lovely objects in heaven.

Taking from Revelation 21:27, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination," Edwards affirms that no offensive, unlovely, wicked, polluted person or thing will ever be found in heaven. "All the persons that belong to the blessed society of heaven are lovely," as children of their lovely Father. There is a great gulf, forever fixed between those who are defiled and those who are redeemed in Christ. "There is no one object there to give offense, or at any time to give occasion for any passion or emotion of hatred or dislike, but every object there shall draw forth love forever and ever" (pg. 16).

2) They shall be not just lovely, but perfectly lovely.

Whereas, in this life, certain things can be lovely and yet, contain some level of offense and manner of unloveliness, in heaven, all persons will be *perfectly* pure and *perfectly* lovely, without even the slightest manner of defect, whatsoever. Hear again, some of Edward's awe-inspiring words concerning this matter:

"That blessed world shall be perfectly bright, without any darkness; perfectly fair, without any spot; perfectly clear, without any cloud. No moral or natural defect shall ever enter there; and there nothing will be seen that is sinful or weak or foolish; nothing, the nature or aspect of which is coarse or displeasing, or that can offend the most refined taste or the most delicate eye. In that blessed place no string shall vibrate out of tune, to cause any jar in the harmony of the music of heaven; and no note be such as to make discord in the anthems of saints and angels...The most impressive and stately cities on earth, however magnificent their buildings, yet have their foundations in the dust, and their streets dirty and defiled, and made to be trodden under foot; but the very streets of this heavenly city are of pure gold, like unto transparent glass, and its foundations are of precious stones, and its gates are pearls (Revelation 21). And all these are but faint emblems of the purity and perfectness of those that dwell therein" (pgs. 16-17).

3) And in heaven, shall be all those objects that the saints have set their hearts upon, and which they have loved above all things while in this world.

Here, Edwards points out, that the heavenly delights, which we loved and longed for on earth, will all be brought to us there. This would include loved ones and brethren, who have died in the faith, the Patriarchs and godly, Biblical examples, who have instructed us in the Scriptures (by their lives and examples), and most of all, our Triune God, with whom, we will have perfect and unhindered fellowship, when we see Him there!

And so, heaven will be a world of love, because only lovely objects will be there; only *perfectly* lovely objects (without anything unlovely in them) will be there; and those things and persons, which most attracted the Christians affections here, will all be there!

III. The Subjects of Love in Heaven

Thirdly then, Edwards moves on to consider "the subjects of love in heaven." Having considered the "objects" of love that heaven contains (referring to the righteous "persons" who are to dwell there), Edwards then addresses the "subjects," which by this, he means, "the hearts in which this love dwells." To this end, he begins by stating, "In every heart in heaven, love dwells and reigns." Edwards again, recognizes the source and fountain of this love, as God Himself, even as the source of light in this world, is the sun. But, from God, it flows out, toward and into, all of the inhabitants of heaven.

Edwards states, "The love of God the Father flows out toward Christ the head, and to all the members through Him, in whom they were beloved before the foundation of the world, and in whom the Father's love was expressed toward them in time, by His death and sufferings, as it now is fully manifested in heaven."

This love, which meets the hearts of every created being in heaven, is then reflected, first and foremost, back toward God Himself, and then in the direction of every other being in heaven, which is altogether lovely! Edwards continues, "There is not a single secret or open enemy among them all. Not one heart is there that is not full of love, and not a solitary inhabitant that is not beloved by all the others. And as all are lovely, so all see each other's

loveliness with full contentment and delight. Every soul goes out in love to every other; and among all the blessed inhabitants, love is mutual, and full, and eternal" (pg. 21).

IV. The Principle or Essence of Love in Heaven

Here Edwards addresses the actual "love itself" (its nature and quality...etc), which fills and blesses the heavenly world. And he does so, by considering it from two angles, "its nature," and "its degree."

1) As to its nature:

Unlike the often unhallowed and carnal love, of this world, Edwards distinguishes the nature of the love in heaven, as a love, which is altogether holy, divine, and spiritual. He notes that the love in heaven, "does not proceed from corrupt principles or selfish motives, nor is it directed to low and vile purposes and ends. As opposed to all this, it is a pure flame, directed by holy motives, and aiming at no ends inconsistent with God's glory and the happiness of the universe. The saints in heaven love God for His own sake, and each other for God's sake, and for the sake of the relation that they have to Him, and the image of God that is upon them" (pg. 23).

2) As to its degree:

Edwards further notes that this love is "perfect," as to its degree. And, in saying this, he seeks to especially emphasize the fact that everyone will love, to the fullness of their capacity, without any taint or hint of pride or jealousy.

Now, the reason Edwards addresses this particular matter, is because we might easily be concerned about how people, enjoying varying degrees of blessing, could possibly love one another perfectly. The Bible clearly speaks of "heavenly rewards," and varying degrees of blessing, measured in accordance with how each individual has used his/her gifts in this life...etc. And naturally, we might question what those of a lower stature (or of an inferior glory) might think of those in a higher position of glory. Will they not be prone to jealousy, and thereby, detract from the perfect flow of love, which presumably makes up heaven? And what of those, who are designated to a higher position of glory? Will they not become proud, looking down upon, or thinking themselves better than those of a lower glory? And by this means, will they

not disturb the perfect flow of love in heaven? In other words, how will people in different positions of glory, maintain a perfect flow of mutual love?

Listen to some of the things that Edwards says, to address this logical concern: "The love that dwells in the heart of God is perfect, with an absolutely infinite and divine perfection. The love of angels and saints to God and Christ, is perfect in its kind, or with such a perfection as is proper to their nature. It is perfect with a sinless perfection, and perfect in that it is consistent with the capacities of their nature...Their love shall be without any remains of any contrary principle, having no pride or selfishness to interrupt or hinder its exercises. Their hearts shall be full of love...In heaven there shall be no remaining enmity or distaste or coldness or deadness of heart towards God and Christ. Not the least remainder of any principle of envy shall exist to be exercised toward angels or other beings who are superior in glory; nor shall there be anything like contempt or slighting of those who are inferiors. Those that have a lower station in glory than others, suffer no lessening of their own happiness by seeing others above them in glory. On the contrary, all the members of that blessed society rejoice in each other's happiness, for the love of benevolence is perfect in them all. Every one has not only a sincere, but a perfect goodwill to every other."

"Sincere and strong love is greatly gratified and delighted in the prosperity of the beloved object; and if the love be perfect, the greater the prosperity of the beloved is, the more is the lover pleased and delighted; for the prosperity of the beloved is, as it were, the food of love, and therefore the greater that prosperity, the more richly is love feasted. The love of benevolence is delighted in beholding the prosperity of another, in the same way that the love of contentment is, in beholding the beauty or perfection of another. So that the superior prosperity of those that are higher in glory, is so far from being a hindrance to the degree of love felt toward them, that it is an addition to it, or a part of it."

"There is undoubtedly an inconceivably pure, sweet, and fervent love between the saints in glory; and that love is in proportion to the perfection and amiableness of the objects beloved. Therefore it must necessarily cause delight in them when they see that the happiness and glory of others are in proportion to their amiableness, and so in proportion to their love to them. Those that are highest in glory, are those that are highest in holiness, and therefore are those that are

most beloved by all the saints; for they must love those that are most holy, and so they will all rejoice in their being the most happy. And it will not be any grief to any of the saints to see those that are higher than themselves in holiness and likeness to God, more loved also than themselves. For all shall have as much love as they desire, and as great manifestations of love as they can bear. And in this manner, all shall be fully satisfied. And where there is perfect satisfaction, there can be no reason for envy. And there will be no temptation for any to envy those that are above them in glory, on account of the latter being lifted up in pride; for there will be no pride in heaven. We are not to conceive that those who are more holy and happy than others in heaven, will be elated and lifted up in their spirit above others; for those who are above others in holiness, will be superior to them in humility. The saints that are highest in glory will be the lowest in humbleness of mind, for their superior humility is part of their superior holiness. Though all are perfectly free from pride, yet, as some will have greater degrees of divine knowledge than others, and larger capacities to see more of the divine perfections, so they will see more of their own comparative littleness and nothingness, and therefore will be lowest and most abased in humility."

"And besides, the inferior in glory will have no temptation to envy those that are higher than themselves, for those that are highest will not only be more loved by the lower for their higher holiness, but they will also have more of the spirit of love to others, and so will love those that are below them more than if their own capacity and elevation were less. They that are highest in degree in glory, will be of the highest capacity; and so having the greatest knowledge, will see most of God's loveliness, and consequently will have love to God and love to the saints most abounding in their hearts. And on this account those that are lower in glory will not envy those that are above them, because they will be most beloved by those that are highest in glory. And the superior in glory will be so far from slighting those that are inferior, that they will have most abundant love for them--greater degrees of love in proportion to their superior knowledge and happiness....Such will be the sweet and perfect harmony among the heavenly saints, and such the perfect love reigning in every heart toward every other, without limit or restriction, or interruption. And no envy, or malice, or revenge, or contempt, or selfishness shall ever enter

there, but all such feelings shall be kept as far away as sin is from holiness, and as hell is from heaven!" (pgs. 24-26).

V. The Excellent Circumstances Attending Love in Heaven

Here, Edwards seeks to consider, "the excellent circumstances in which love shall be exercised, expressed and enjoyed in heaven. And he leaves us with ten:

1) Love in heaven is always mutual:

"No inhabitants of that blessed world will ever be grieved with the thought that they are slighted by those that they love, or that their love is not fully and fondly returned" (pg. 27).

Every exercise of love, will be met with the appropriate return, in proportion to that which was exercised.

2) The joy of heavenly love shall never be interrupted or stifled by jealousy:

"Heavenly lovers will have no doubt of the love of each other. They shall have no fear that the declarations and professions of love are hypocritical; but shall be perfectly satisfied of the sincerity and strength of each other's affection, as much as if there were a window in every breast, so that everything in the heart can be seen. There shall be no such thing as flattery or insincerity in heaven, but there, perfect sincerity shall reign through all and in all...There, every expression of love shall come from the bottom of the heart, and all that is professed shall be really and truly felt" (pg. 29).

3) There shall be nothing within themselves to block or hinder the saints in heaven in the exercises and expressions of love:

The saints in heaven, "will have no dullness and awkwardness, and no corruption of heart to war against divine love, and hinder its expressions; and there no earthly body shall encumber the heavenly flame with its heaviness" (pg. 31). All of the things, which presently hinder us, brethren; the flesh, which, often times, weighs us down with dullness and imperfection, will no longer stand in the way, keeping us from freely and whole heartedly, expressing our love toward God and others.

4) In heaven love will be expressed with perfect decency and wisdom:

"There shall be no indecent or unwise or dissonant speeches or actions--no foolish and sentimental fondness--no needless meddlesomeness--no low or sinful inclinations of passion--and no such thing as affections clouding or deluding reason, or going before or against it. But wisdom and discretion shall be as perfect in the saints as love is, and every expression of their love shall be attended with the most amiable and perfect decency and discretion and wisdom" (pg. 31).

5) There shall be nothing external in heaven to keep its inhabitants at a distance from each other, or to hinder their most perfect enjoyment of each other's love:

"There shall be no disharmony through difference of disposition, or manners, or circumstances, or from various opinions, interests, feelings or alliances. But all shall be united in the same interest, and all alike allied to the same Savior, and all employed in the same business, serving and glorifying the same God" (pg. 32).

6) In heaven all shall be united together in very near and dear relations:

We will "be but one society, or rather but one family, and all members of the household of God" (pg. 32).

7) In heaven all shall have property and ownership in each other:

"The saints shall be God's/Christ's...and...God/Christ shall be theirs." The saint's shall also be one another's...etc. (Pg. 33).

8) In heaven they shall enjoy each other's love in perfect and uninterrupted prosperity:

The saints shall "enjoy one another's love in the greatest prosperity, and in glorious riches and comfort, and in the highest honor and dignity, reigning together in the heavenly kingdom--inheriting all things, sitting on thrones, all wearing crowns of life, and being made kings and priests unto God forever" (pg. 34). There will be no more poverty or suffering, and everyone will rejoice in each other's prosperity, as much as they rejoice in their own.

9) In heaven all things shall combine to promote their love, and give advantage for mutual enjoyment:

"There shall be none there to tempt any to dislike or hatred; no busybodies, or malicious adversaries, to make intentional misrepresentations, or create misunderstandings, or spread

abroad any evil reports, but every being and every thing shall combine to promote love, and the full enjoyment of love" (pg. 34).

10) The inhabitants of heaven shall all know that they will continue in the perfect enjoyment of each other's love forever:

The love of God and of saints continuously expressed, will never end, and the people of God will never, for a moment, fear that it might end. They will be upheld by the utmost certainty, that their happiness in this "world of love," will continue on forever, and ever and ever! "They shall be in no fear of any end to this happiness, or of any abatement from its fullness and blessedness, or that they shall ever be weary of its exercises and expressions, or over indulged with its enjoyments, or that the beloved objects shall ever grow old or disagreeable, so that their love shall at last die away. All in heaven shall flourish in immortal youth and freshness" (pgs. 35-36).

VI. The Happy Effects and Fruits of Love in Heaven

Here, Edwards leaves us with two main effects and fruits of love in heaven:

1) The most excellent and perfect behavior of all the inhabitants of heaven toward God and each other:

"Life in heaven will be without the least sinful failure or error. None shall ever come short, or turn aside from the way of holiness in the least degree, but every feeling and action shall be perfect in itself and in all its circumstances. Every part of their behavior shall be holy and divine in matter, and form, and spirit, and end" (pgs. 37-38).

2) Perfect tranquility and joy in heaven:

"Charity, or holy and humble Christian love, is a principle of wonderful power to give indescribable quietness and tranquillity to the soul. It 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" (pg. 38).

VII. What Marks are Found Upon Those Who Will Inhabit Heaven?

Having brought forth all of his main points, Edwards leaves us with two applications, which, for the sake of time, I will just mention:

1) If heaven is 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.

2) How happy those are who are entitled to heaven. What then are the distinguishing marks of such persons, who will inherit such glory?

"First, 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.

Second, 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.

Third, they are those who, from the love that is in them, are, in heart and life, in principle and practice, struggling after holiness" (pgs. 45-47).

Conclusion

After spending a chapter, utilizing these truths as an alarm to awaken the unconverted, Edwards concludes his message with, "An Exhortation to earnestly seek after heaven."

And he leaves us with these five directives, for seeking heaven:

1) "Let not your heart go after the things of this world, as your chief good...If you would seek heaven, your affections must be taken off from the pleasures of this world. You must not allow yourself in sensuality, or worldliness, or the pursuit of the enjoyments or honors of the world, or occupy your thoughts or time in heaping up the dust of the earth. You must mortify the desires of vain-glory, and become poor in spirit and lowly in heart" (pg. 58).

2) "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" (pg. 58).

3) "Be content to pass through all difficulties in the way to heaven...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?" (pgs. 58-59).

4) "In all your way let your eye be fixed on Jesus, who has gone to heaven as your forerunner" (pg. 59). [As your Example, Mediator, Intercessor and Strength...etc]

5) "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" (pg. 59). As we have this hope in us, let us work toward that great and glorious end!

AMEN!!!