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Sermon Notes

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## **Heaven is a World of Love, Part 2**

### **1 Corinthians 13:8-13**

This is my final sermon in 1 Corinthians 13, and it is very appropriate that we should end by continuing what we started last week... a rich delightful powerful satisfying meditation on Heaven as a world of love.

Jonathan Edwards culminated his seventeen sermons on 1 Corinthians 13 in 1738 with a forty-page message entitled "Heaven is a world of love." It is one of the greatest pieces of theological reasoning and explanation I have ever read. It moved me over five years ago to begin a similar theological, exegetical, and rational exploration of heaven that continues to this day.

This sermon (and last week's) are just my own restating and simplification of and interaction with Edwards's essay.

My desire is that my efforts will stimulate you to heavenly meditations and to a much more heavenly lifestyle

Edwards divided his essay into six headings:

- 1) The Cause and Fountain of the Love that is in Heaven
- 2) The Objects of that Love that is in Heaven
- 3) The Subjects of that Love that is in Heaven
- 4) The Principle (or Nature) of that Love that is in Heaven

- 5) The Circumstances in which Heavenly Love is Exercised, Expressed, and Enjoyed
- 6) The Happy Effects/Fruits of that Love that is in Heaven

Last week, we walked through the first four... this morning, we will finish the last two

By way of review:

#### I. The Cause and Fountain of that Love in Heaven

- A. The God of Love HIMSELF Dwells in Heaven
- B. The Triune God is a God of Love
- C. We Will Have Perfect Fellowship with the God of Love
  1. In heaven, our fellowship with God will be perfect, face to face, without any blockage or hindrance or distance
  2. We will see God and drink in God's love and swim in it for all eternity

#### II. The Objects of Love in Heaven

- A. There Will be Nothing but LOVELY Objects in Heaven

***Revelation 21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.***

- B. All the Redeemed will be Perfectly Lovely... Radiantly Glorious

Edwards: "No string in the heavenly symphony shall vibrate out of tune"; not a single discordant note in the heavenly song of worship to the Lamb

- C. The Place Shall Be Perfectly Beautiful... the New Heavens and New Earth (described in Revelation 21-22)

### III. The Subjects of our Heavenly Love

By this, Edwards means the HEARTS of those who love... both the HEART of God and the HEARTS of the redeemed...

- A. The Heart of God is the original seat of Love... the capacity to love
- B. Love is in God as Light is in the Sun
- C. God is TRULY ATTRACTED TO all the Redeemed in Heaven
- D. So also the HEART of Christ delights fully and personally in all of his saints... they are his BRIDE... his BODY!
- E. In the Same Way... the Hearts of the Saints and Angels will be perfectly full of love

### IV. Of the Nature and Degree of Heavenly Love

#### A. Nature

- 1. Altogether holy and divine... totally conformed to God's love
- 2. Love for God perfected
  - a. Our love for God will be based on a perfect KNOWLEDGE of God... we will see him face to face and know him fully as he has known us fully

Edwards does not mention this, but let me interject here: we will never be OMNISCIENT... therefore, our knowledge of God will keep expanding for all eternity... as we keep learning new things God has done, new reasons to praise him; therefore our love for God will also keep expanding and improving

- b. So the saints' love for God in heaven will be pure, accurate, based on truth, free from idolatrous conceptions and false motives
- 3. Love for others is perfected as well
  - a. All the redeemed will love all the other redeemed with a perfectly pure love... free from all evil motives; no base carnal

lusts or selfish principles; no pride, no envy, no greed, no boasting

#### B. Degree

1. Our heavenly love will be perfect in degree
2. Simply put, we will love God vastly MORE in heaven than we ever could on earth; our intensity of love toward him will be overpoweringly strong

#### C. Key Concept: DIFFERING LEVELS OF GLORY

1. It was Edwards that pointed out to my mind that there will be differing levels of glory in the resurrection, for as 1 Corinthians 15:41-42 says ***“Star differs from star in glory... so will it be with the resurrection from the dead.”***
2. Glorification will drive away all enmity, distaste, coldness toward other saints; no ENVY or ARROGANCE toward other saints
3. We will totally delight in the honors and blessings and rewards and crowns bestowed by God on each of our brothers and sisters in heaven; the greater the prosperity and blessedness of each in heaven, the greater will our delight be for that person

Edwards: “It will not be a grief to any saint to see another saint elevated and honored above himself; actually it will draw forth greater love and admiration and honor because God has done it and God is revealed and glorified by that person.”

#### D. Variable Experiences in Heaven

1. This varying level of glory in heaven opens up the concept of varying levels of experience in heaven
2. Edwards said “All shall have as much love as they desire and as great manifestations as they can bear; and so all shall be FULLY SATISFIED, and where there is perfect satisfaction, there can be no envy.”

Interesting factor: HOW WE LIVE ON EARTH WILL AFFECT HOW MUCH OF GOD'S GLORY WE EXPERIENCE AND ENJOY IN HEAVEN! "The measure you use on earth will be the measure you receive in heaven."

3. There will be some saints vastly more honored and radiantly more glorious than I will be... there service to Christ on earth will merit such glory; but I will not be jealous in the least, but will feel absolutely delighted that they are so glorious... and will see the justice and rightness of the way God honored them above me

#### E. Perfect Love for the Saints

Edwards: "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 attractiveness of the objects beloved."

#### F. Perfect in Glory = Perfect in Humility

1. In the same way, those most glorious in heaven will also have the greatest vision of the glory of God and a clearer sense of their own LITTLENESS before him... so they will paradoxically be the most HUMBLE... the most HONORED in heaven will also be the most HUMBLE!

Edwards: "Such will be the sweet and perfect harmony among the heavenly saints, and such will be the perfect love reigning in every heart toward every other, without limit or alloy or interruption; and no envy or malice or revenge or contempt or selfishness will ever enter there, but all such feelings will be kept as far away as sin is from holiness and as hell is from heaven."

SO... that's what we covered last time.

Now...

## V. The Excellent Circumstances in which Love Will Be EXERCISED, EXPRESSED, and ENJOYED in Heaven

### A. Love in Heaven is Always MUTUAL

1. As it is expressed, so it will be answered in proportion
2. Love always seeks an answer... unrequited love is one of the greatest tragedies and causes of sorrow in this world
  - a. If a person expresses love toward another, and it is unanswered, or even answered at a lower level
  - b. How many popular songs are effectively primal screams over this issue? I could list songs right now in which a singer is in absolute anguish over a love that never bloomed or that flourished once but is now dead... the grief is real and powerful and can even lead to suicide in extreme cases
3. BUT in heaven, that will all be over forever! Love expressed from one saint will be reciprocated in another saint
  - a. Keep in mind that marital love is finished... in heaven, we will neither marry nor be given in marriage
  - b. Exclusive love relationships will be obsolete, consummated in the perfect oneness all the saints will have in God with each other
  - c. There will be no coolness, no aloofness, no jealousy...
4. And MOST IMPORTANTLY, the most painful and powerful unrequited love in this sin-cursed world was God's love for his people
  - a. The Book of Hosea portrays us as prostitute Gomer, whose affections were constantly wandering from her husband... whose time had to be purchased by him or she would not be with him
  - b. How much grief our wandering hearts brought to our heavenly Father! How much was his perfect love for us so often

unrequited because of our idolatry and lustful desire after the world?!

- c. But in heaven, we will love God perfectly and ardently; his love for us will no longer be unrequited, but we will finally and perfectly LOVE HIM BACK!!!
- 5. And not only that, we will have eternity to probe the MAGITUDE and DIMENSIONS of God's love for us in Christ... larger than the universe

***Ephesians 3:18-19 [YOU WILL EACH] have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.***

These words will be fulfilled only in heaven! That is dimensional language... think of the extremities of the universe... God's love for us in Christ fills the universe!

If we have opportunity to travel to the edge of the New Heavens, even there you will find Christ's love for you!

Heaven is dynamic... exploring the "Dimensions and Details" of God's love for us in Christ!

#### B. Our Love in Heaven will be Uninterrupted, Never Damped

- 1. No stray thoughts or dissonant demeanors will ever creep in to ruin love, not even for an instant
- 2. Here our hearts grow weary... or love dims... the church at Ephesus had "forsaken their first love"; so also Israel's love for God waned

***Jeremiah 2:2 "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.***

- 3. So also in human to human love relationships, our hearts are so weak and changeful; people "fall out of love" with each other;

4. But in heaven, our love and ardor will never wane... it will only continually mature and grow stronger
  5. No fear of flattery or fakery or deception... the saints in heaven will not merely APPEAR to love each other; they actually WILL
- Illus. Sadly so much of our love is like a thin veneer of gold plating; I remember years ago, I worked in a wet metallization laboratory in which we plated things with a thin layer of gold for making electronic devices; I was allowed to gold plate a cross I owned... and it looked beautiful and sparkly... for about a DAY! But every time I touched that cross, a little of the gold came off... within 48 hours, it was almost completely gone. So it is with our love... it is often a thin coating over a changeful heart
6. Not so in heaven! Hearts shall be pure and perfectly united behind every expression we make of love... we will be what we appear to be
  7. And no evil influence can come from the outside to corrupt the pure expressions of love in the inhabitants of that happy world!
  8. Furthermore, nothing will bubble up from deep within us to hinder or block love or the enjoyment of that love
    - a. In this world, we are so dull... like clods... we don't GET IT; we are too obscure to realize the feelings and expressions of another
    - b. Also in this world, we are guarded and careful and closed because of past wounds; we are fragile and cautious; we don't believe it when people are nice to us or express love
    - c. BUT in heaven, we will have been healed perfectly! We will be open and bold and confident in love for one another
- C. Our Resurrected, Glorified Minds and Bodies will AID Love for All Eternity
1. Our flesh hinders the expression of our love here on earth



2. But our resurrection minds/hearts/bodies will greatly aid our expression of heavenly love, especially to God
3. Our resurrection and glorification will make us equal to the task of expressing love to God and others, and receiving love from God and others
4. Our minds will perfectly perceive the truth about God and others; our hearts will perfectly delight in the truth, and our bodies will perfectly and energetically express love... tirelessly!!
5. TRUTH + ENERGY!!

Edwards: "Often [the saints on earth] want to fly, but they are held down as with a dead weight upon their wings. Often they would be active and mount up as a flame of fire, but they find themselves hampered, chained down so they cannot do as their love inclines them to do... Love for God pushes them to erupt and burst forth in praise, but their dull, weak, lifeless flesh holds them back.

In heaven, they shall have no such hindrance. They will have no dullness... and no corruption of the heart to wage war against divine love and hinder its expressions; and in heaven no earthly body shall clog with its heaviness the heavenly flame. The saints in heaven shall have no difficulty expressing all their love. **Their souls being on fire with holy love shall not be like a fire pent up, but like a flame uncovered and at liberty. Their spirits, being winged with love shall have no weight upon them to hinder their flight.** There shall be no want of strength or activity, nor any want of words wherewith to praise the object of their affection. Nothing shall hinder them from communing with God and praising and serving him just as their love inclines them to do."

D. In Heaven, Love will be expressed with perfect DECENCY and WISDOM

1. On earth, sometimes we "swing and miss" as we try to express our love to other people

2. We are well-intentioned, but the words might actually offend, or show our ignorance of their true circumstances or needs; a gift or kind of expression might end up being HAM-HANDED rather than skillful and elegant
  3. But in heaven, there will be no unwise, ill-timed, foolish overtures... only genuine expressions of love genuinely received
- E. Nothing External Will Ever Separate Us or Hinder our Most Perfect Enjoyment of Love Relationships in Heaven
1. John Bunyan was arrested and imprisoned in 17<sup>th</sup> century England for illegally preaching without a license; he said that the separation from his wife and blind daughter was like the pulling of his flesh from his bones
  2. In 1858, when John Paton said goodbye to his godly and loving father so that he could sail for the South Pacific islands to bring the gospel there, the separation scene was almost more than they could bear... it was like death
  3. Obviously the single greatest separator of love relationships in this world is death itself... it is written into even the marriage vows: “til death do us part”; but our love relationships in heaven are eternal, and nothing will ever separate us again
  4. Beyond that, there is no man-made wall of separation that will hinder love relationships... no man-made customs or cultural differences or language barriers or imposed regulations that could possibly separate the people of God one from another
  5. Especially language and culture: two Christians can sit in the same room and desire to express Christian love to each other, but they share no common language and their cultures are very different; all of that will be solved by our heavenly unity
  6. Especially all past history of wrongs... bitterness from the way one group has treated another group—like racism, or the brutality of soldiers from this or that country, or long-standing feuds between clans... all that bitterness will be gone, swallowed in a sea of love and forgiveness

7. In heaven, we shall all be clearly members of one large family of God... truly brothers and sisters with a common heritage and lineage and one heavenly Father and one Savior who is not ashamed to call us brothers!
8. We will truly BELONG to one another... and we shall BELONG to GOD, and he will BELONG to us

***Song of Solomon 6:3 I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine***

F. Uninterrupted Prosperity

1. No difficulties, afflictions, trials will hinder our relationships
2. No famine will put a strain on resources; no natural disaster will devastate all that we've worked to accomplish
3. No grief, sorrow, or pain of any kind will dim our experience of love in heaven
4. Christ will no longer be a "man of sorrows and familiar with grief"
5. All things that happen in heaven will work together to INCREASE our love for God and for each other

G. Our Ownership of Property will Serve Our Perfect Love for Each other

1. There will be private ownership in heaven
  - a. Our crowns will be ours; those who sit on thrones, the thrones are truly their to sit on
  - b. Jesus spoke of "property of your own"

***Luke 16:11-12 if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?***

2. But yet, we will have an expansive heart of sharing with others

***Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.***

H. The Inhabitants of Heaven Will Know Peacefully and Confidently That This Experience Will Go On Forever

1. In this world, we know that ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END... because we are cursed to die
2. But in heaven, it will be exactly the opposite... we will know that ALL GOOD THINGS MUST ONLY CONTINUE or even IMPROVE!!
3. We will have no fear of bad news in heaven, for there will be no more curse; and the gates of the New Jerusalem will stand openly continually for there are no enemies, no threats
4. The same perfect love we had for Christ the first moment we see him in heaven will only be established more and grow... never recede or die
5. We will have no fear of the future in heaven... no fear that all this will eventually go away

Edwards: "All in heaven shall flourish in immortal youth and freshness. Age shall not diminish anyone's beauty or vigor. Attributes shall not wither. Like a river flowing forever deeper, increasing, always springing forth, always blossoming, always bearing fruit... not static

***Revelation 22:1-2 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb<sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.***

VI. The Blessed Effects and Fruits of this Love as It Will Be So Expressed in Heaven

A. Most Excellent/Perfect Behavior Toward God and One Another

1. Heavenly society will be perfect in every way... saturated with love for one another
2. No one will be isolated, unpopular, left out... all will be welcomed at all times
3. We don't know how we will be employed in heaven... but why would God give us amazing resurrection bodies, energetic and clear-thinking minds, perfect hearts and a whole new radiant universe to explore and NOTHING TO DO!!
4. But the centerpiece of heavenly activity will be worship around the throne of God... pouring forth energetic, intelligent, heart-felt praise forever and ever with our brothers and sisters

#### B. Perfect Tranquility and Joy in Heaven

1. Sin brings disturbance... churning like the waves in a hurricane
2. But the heavenly sea is placid, calm as glass

### VII. Applications

#### Non-Christians:

- A. Come to Christ! There should be no greater "fear of missing out" than this one! You don't want to miss this perfect world of love... hell is a "world of hatred"

#### Christians:

- B. Spend more time (even daily) learning about and meditating on heaven (Colossians 3:1-4)... "Set your hearts on heaven, not on earth"
- C. Think of yourself more and more as an "alien and stranger" here on earth... "This world is NOT MY HOME!" Let meditation on heaven make you realize "Whom have I in heaven but you, and earth has nothing I desire besides you." (Ps. 73)
- D. Let study of heaven as a "world of love" move you to love God and others more and more. Go back over 1 Cor. 13 daily in prayer
- E. Pray Ephesians 3:17-19 over yourself and others

*Ephesians 3:17-19 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

- F. Let thoughts of heaven's holiness and purity drive out all lusts and sin habits that you may be struggling with
- G. Let zeal for the glory of God in the salvation of sinners move you to TAKE MORE RISKS in evangelism and missions
- H. Let the comforts of the heaven we have described today greatly reduce any sorrows you may have over earthly "losses and crosses"