

“CHARITY THINKETH NO EVIL.” 1 Corinthians 13:5

(Sermon to the saints at Westboro Baptist Church on June 21, 2020)

*“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[.]”*
(1 Corinthians 13:1-8)

In John Chapters 13 and 15, our Lord Jesus Christ, including on the eve of his crucifixion, commands four times to “*Love one another.*” (**John 13:34 (twice); 15:12; 15:17**). Another nine times his faithful apostles (Peter and Paul and John) command “*Love one another.*” (**Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11 and 23; 1 John 4:7, 11, and 12; and 2 John 1:5** (“*And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.*”)) And the same sentiment is repeated continuously in the Bible. As to that love, Jesus Christ said, “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” (**John 13:35**).

The word of exhortation today is that the spirit of Charity, or Christian love, “*thinketh no evil.*” (**1 Corinthians 13:5(d)**) Or, as **Jonathan Edwards** says, “it is contrary to a disposition to think or judge uncharitably of others.” And this as it respects three things: their state (i.e., elect or reprobate), their qualities and their actions.

“Thinketh” from Strongs:

“3049 λογίζομαι logizomai log-id’-zom-ahee AV-think 9, impute 8, reckon 6, count 5, account 4, suppose 2, reason 1, number 1, misc 5; 41 1) to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over 1a) to take into account, to make an account of 1a1) metaph. to pass to one’s account, to impute 1a2) a thing is reckoned as or to be something, i.e. as availing for or equivalent to something, as having the like force and weight 1b) to number among, reckon with 1c) to reckon or account 2) to reckon inward, count up or weigh the reasons, to deliberate 3) by reckoning up all the reasons, to gather or infer 3a) to consider, take into account, weigh, meditate on 3b) to suppose, deem, judge 3c) to determine, purpose, decide

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This word deals with reality. If I "logizomai" or reckon that my bank book has \$25 in it, it has \$25 in it. Otherwise I am deceiving myself. This word refers to facts not suppositions.

“Evil” from Strongs: “2556 κακός kakos kak-os’ apparently a primary word; TDNT-3:469,391; {See TDNT 351} adj 1) of a bad nature 1a) not such as it ought to be 2) of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting 2a) base, wrong, wicked 3) troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful.”

Adam Clarke: “(9.) Thinketh no evil] ουλογιζεται το κακον. "Believes no evil where no evil seems." Never supposes that a good action may have a bad motive; gives every man credit for his profession of religion, uprightness, godly zeal, &c., while nothing is seen in his conduct or in his spirit inconsistent with this profession. His heart is so governed and influenced by the love of God, that he cannot think of evil but where it appears. The original implies that he does not invent or devise any evil; or, does not reason on any particular act or word so as to infer evil from it; for this would destroy his love to his brother; it would be ruinous to charity and benevolence.” (Emphasis supplied).

Mr. Clarke in referring to “his profession of religion” as that form of sound doctrine and words that the Bible references and teaches. **Romans 6:17:** “*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*” **2 Timothy 1:13:** “*Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*”

But when actual evil appears, Amos rightly says (**Amos 5:15**), “*Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.*” We must “*take forth the precious from the vile,*” (**Jeremiah 15:19**) and our Lord Jesus Christ warns to “*give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.*” (**Matthew 7:6**)

Jonathan Edwards has a sermon on this section of 1 Corinthians 13:5, he calls, “The Spirit of Charity the Opposite of a Censorious Spirit.” In that sermon he suggests that what is spoken against here includes these things: condemning the state of others from things that are no evidence of them being in a bad state (like Job’s friends), for failings they see in them which are common to men, even their own selves, and making no due allowances for their natural temperament, strength and stature, their want of education or other peculiar disadvantage under which they labor; judging evil of the good qualities of others and magnifying their bad qualities; judging evil of others’ words or actions when there is no evidence of it; assuming the worst things about people’s conduct that they suppose they do out of sight of others; believing every bad thing that is said about another person and spreading it without concern for the truth of it; and putting the worst construction on others’ actions or words.

He cites to the following verses to warn against all such: **1 Timothy 6:4**: where these things are called “*evil surmisings.*” (**Psalms 15:1-3**) And says that those who abide on God’s “*holy hill*” (a/k/a as Elijah’s “before whom I stand [the Lord God of Israel]” **1 Kings 17:1**), “*taketh not up a reproach against his neighbor,*” and “*backbiteth not with his tongue.*” **Proverbs 17:4**: “*A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.*” **James 4:11**: “*Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.*” **Romans 14:4**: “*Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*” **Psalms 50:19, 20**: “*Thou giveth thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother’s son.*” **Titus 3:1-2**: “*Put them in mind... to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men*” **1 Peter 2:1**: “*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.*” **1 Corinthians 4:5**: “*Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the*

Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”
And, **Matthew 7:1**: “*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*”

From **Barnes Notes**: “Thinketh no evil. That is, puts the best possible construction on the motives and the conduct of others. This expression also is comparative. It means that love, or that a person under the influence of love, is not malicious, censorious, disposed to find fault, or to impute improper motives to others. It is not only “not easily provoked,” not soon excited, but it is not disposed to think that there was any evil intention even in cases which might tend to irritate or exasperate us. 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; 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. The Greek word (λογιζεται) is that which is commonly rendered impute, and is correctly rendered here thinketh. It means, does not reckon, charge, or impute to a man any evil intention or design. 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 irrefragable evidence. True religion, therefore, will prompt to charitable judging; nor is there a more striking evidence of the destitution of true religion, than a disposition to impute the worst motives and opinions to a man.”

John Gill: “thinketh no evil; not but that evil thoughts are in such a man’s heart, for none are without them; though they are hateful, abominable, and grieving to such as are partakers of the grace of God, who long to be delivered from them: but the meaning is, either that one possessed of this grace of love does not think of the evil that is done him by another; he forgives, as God has forgiven him, so as to forget the injury done him, and remembers it no more; and so the Arabic version reads it, “and remembers not evil”; having once forgiven it, he thinks of it no more; or he does not meditate revenge, or devise mischief, and contrive evil against man that has done evil to him, as Esau did against his brother Jacob; so the Ethiopic version, by way of explanation, adds, “neither thinks evil, nor consults evil”; or as the word here used will bear to be rendered, “does not impute evil”; reckon or place it to the account of him that has committed it against him, but freely and fully forgives, as God, when he

forgives sin, is said not to impute it; or such an one is not suspicious of evil in others, he does not indulge evil surmises, and groundless jealousies; which to do is very contrary to this grace of love.”

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (JFB): “thinketh no evil — imputeth not evil [ALFORD]; literally, "the evil" which actually is there (#Pr 10:12 1Pe 4:8). Love makes allowances for the falls of others, and is ready to put on them a charitable construction. Love, so far from devising evil against another, excuses "the evil" which another inflicts on her [ESTIUS]; doth not meditate upon evil inflicted by another [BENGEL]; and in doubtful cases, takes the more charitable view [GROTIUS].”

It sounds like Grotius believes there is a presumption of charity; the tie goes to the runner-charity.

JFB refers to two verses: First: **Proverbs 10:12:** “*Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*” In expounding this verse, one must necessarily refer to the following verses:

Proverbs 15:18: “*A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*” That wrathful man should have read the outlines from earlier sermons from this pulpit, on 1 Corinthians 13.

Proverbs 16:27: “*An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.*” You really have to work hard to dig things up. Remember that steward who proclaimed that “*I cannot dig*”? (**Luke 16:3**) I’m on my way there. It’s hard work. You use muscles you never use when you dig. I don’t recommend it in this context at all. Planting a tree? You have to. But not here.

Proverbs 17:9: “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.” Please note: covereth is the opposite of diggeth up.

Proverbs 28:25: “*He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.*” June is sodomite pride month. Enough said. Please refer to the many sermons on Pride from this pulpit. Pride in man is universally about himself. Pride has to be the most opposite and incompatible trait for a person professing Christianity. Paul said at **Galatians 6:14:** “*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*”

Proverbs 29:22: “*An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.*” Please refer to the sermons on Anger from this pulpit.

James 4:1: “*From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*” Lust is a strong desire for that which is forbidden.

James 5:20: “*Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*”

Second, **1 Peter 4:8:** “*And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*” **Gill** says that covering is “from the sight of men, both of those against whom they are committed, and others; since charity, or true love, thinks no ill, but puts the best constructions upon the words and actions of fellow Christians, and does not take them up, and improve and exaggerate them, but lets them lie buried in oblivion: it takes no notice of injuries, offences, and affronts, but overlooks them, bears with them, and forgives them, so that they are never raked up, and seen any more; which prevents much scandal, strife, and trouble.”

Matthew Henry: “Charity thinks no evil. It cherishes no malice, nor gives way to revenge: so some understand it. It is not soon, nor long, angry; it is never mischievous, nor inclined to revenge; it does not suspect evil of others, ου λογίζεται το κακον — it does not reason out evil, charge guilt upon them by inference and innuendo, when nothing of this sort appears open. True love is not apt to be jealous and suspicious; it will hide faults that appear, and draw a veil over them, instead of hunting and raking out those that lie covered and concealed: it will never indulge suspicion without proofs, but will rather incline to darken and disbelieve evidence against the person it affects. It will hardly give into an ill opinion of another, and it will do it with regret and reluctance when the evidence cannot be resisted; hence it will never be forward to suspect ill, and reason itself into a bad opinion upon mere appearances, nor give way to suspicion without any. It will not make the worst construction of things, but put the best face that it can on circumstances that have no good appearance”.

Charles Spurgeon: “Always try to put the best construction on other people’s actions and work. Let gentleness triumph.”

Matthew Poole: “thinketh no evil, that is, no mischief, nothing that may be hurtful and prejudicial to his neighbour. Or else, he doth not rashly suspect his neighbour for doing evil (which possibly may be the better interpretation); and so it teacheth us, that lightly to take up evil reports of our neighbours, is a violation of charity; for the man that hath a true love to his brother, though he may believe evil of his brother, and charge him with evil, when it evidently appears to him that he is guilty; yet before that be evident to him, he will not suspect, nor think any such things of him.”

Robertson’s NT Word Picture: “Taketh not account of evil (ου λογιζεται το κακον). Old verb from λογος, to count up, to take account of as in a ledger or note-book, "the evil" (το κακον) done to love with a view to settling the account.”

John Trapp: “Thinketh no evil] Is not suspicious, or doth not meditate revenge.”

The Bible has several examples of how often, when the truth comes fully out, do things appear far better concerning others than at first we were ready to judge. When the children of Reuben, and of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had built an altar by Jordan, the rest of Israel heard of it, and presently concluded that they had turned away from the Lord, and rushed into a resolution to go to war against them. But when the truth came to light, it appeared, on the contrary, that they had erected their altar for a good end, even for the worship of God. See Joshua Chapter 22. Eli thought Hannah was drunk, when she came up to the temple; but when the truth came to light, he was satisfied that she was full of grief, and was praying and pouring out her soul before God (**1 Sam. 1:12-16**). David concluded, from what Ziba told him, that Mephibosheth had manifested a rebellious and treasonable spirit against his crown, and so acted on his censorious judgment, greatly to the injury of Mephibosheth; but when the truth came to appear, he saw it was quite otherwise. (**2 Samuel Chapter 16**). I would not have cut Mephibosheth’s estate in half, based upon Ziba’s demonstrable lies, but you have to admire Mephibosheth’s attitude towards it all: “*And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.*” (**2 Samuel 19:30**). Elijah judged ill of the state of Israel, that none were true worshippers of God but himself; but when God told him the truth, it appeared that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. (**1 Kings 19 and Romans 11:4**). You know in your own experience, how often, on thorough examination, have we found things better of others than we have heard, and then at first we were ready to judge. There are always

two sides to every story, and it is generally wise, and safe, and charitable to take the best; and yet there is probably no one way in which persons are so liable to be wrong, as in presuming the worst is true, and in forming and expressing their judgment of others, and of their actions, without waiting till all the truth is known. **Proverbs 18:13:** “*He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*” Therefore, a servant of the Lord must be patient with all. **2 Timothy 2:24.**

“*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*” **Hebrews 13:20-21.** I love you. Amen.

Now let us shew the Lord’s death by the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.*” **1 Corinthians 11:23-26.**

In Connection with the Lord’s Supper I refer you to the book of Song of Solomon.