

## Evil Surmisings

I Timothy 6:3-5

### I. INTRODUCTION: I

I. 2 Paul defines the beauty of true “*agape*” love in I Corinthians 13:1-8a.

- A. *Agape* (“*charity*” in the KJV) describes “affection, good-will, love, benevolence” (Vine).
- B. It is used to describe the love of men towards his fellowman, love of men toward God, love of God and/or Christ toward men, love of God toward Christ.
- C. The Greeks had six words for love:
  - (1) *Eros*: sexual passion, named after the Greek god of fertility; *eros* was viewed as a dangerous, fiery, and irrational form of love that could take hold and possess you. In the Greek mind it involved a loss of control which frightened them. That’s exactly what many people do when they fall “madly in love.”
  - (2) *Philia*: deep friendship. This variety of love describes close friendships and was valued by the Greeks far more than *eros*. This type of love is characteristic of brothers in arms who are willing to give their lives for one another (e.g., Medal of Honor winners). Loyalty is a big part of *philia*. Another kind of *philia*, sometimes called *storge*, described the love between parents and their children.
  - (3) *Ludus*: playful love, referring to the affections between children or young lovers (i.e., “puppy love”). *Ludus* primarily describes the warm feelings for others one might see in a social setting where people are bantering back and forth and laughing with friends.
  - (4) *Pragma*: longstanding love, a mature form of love displayed, for example, by happily married couples that have been married a long time. It involves a deep understanding that has developed between people over the period of a long relationship. *Pragma* is about making compromises to help the relationship work over time, it involves showing patience, tolerance, and forbearance.
  - (5) *Philautia*: love of self, self-respect. The Greeks realized there are two forms of “self-love.” First is the unhealthy variety associated with narcissism, where one becomes self-obsessed and focused on personal fame and fortune. The second is the healthier version where one is comfortable in “his own skin” as we often say. The idea is that if you like yourself you will have plenty of love for others also.
  - (6) *Agape*: love for everyone. *Agape* love is the highest and most radical form of love as it is a selfless love. This is the type of love one extends to all people, whether they are close family members or total strangers. *Agape* is translated “*charity*” in the KJV.
    - (a) It is a love that puts the best interests of others ahead of self regardless of the “lovability” of the object of *agape*.
    - (b) For example, in John 3:16 Jesus says, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*”
    - (c) God loves us despite the fact we are sinners and not “loveable” (cf. Rom. 5:8), He “loves” us because He has our best interests at heart (i.e., salvation, redemption, etc.).
2. *Agape* love is the type of love that is most precious, but most rarely seen in today’s world. It would serve us well to read I Corinthians 13:1-8a often and perform some serious self-examination!
3. 3 One very important aspect of *agape* love is expressed by Paul when he said love “*thinks no evil*” (keeps no accounts of evil, NKJV footnote), “*rejoices in the truth*” and “*believes all things*”; we rightly conclude the converse is true of hatred (I Cor. 13:5-7).

- A. Hate thinks evil of others (keeps account of wrongs suffered), rejoices in the error of others and refuses to believe good things about others.
  - B. It is no wonder that “he who does not love his brother abides in death” and, “whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (1 Jn. 3:14-15).
  - C. Love refuses to hold and express evil suspicions toward others.
  - D. This is something that is very hard to do, especially when you’ve been “burned” by other people (i.e., taken advantage of, betrayed, cheated, etc.; “I’ll never speak to him/her again!”).
4. Paul, in 1 Timothy 6:3-5 describes this sin of thinking evil of others:
- 1 Tim. 6:3-5:** *“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.”*
- A. Note that Paul says “evil surmisings” (i.e., “evil suspicions”; NKJ, NAS, NIV) are counted among the sins of the proud and is practiced by those obsessed with disputes and arguments (1 Tim. 6:3-4).
  - B. It is thinking the worst of others (often, deflecting attention away from one’s own sins).
  - C. God will not tolerate such arrogant treatment of others, and neither should we. Therefore, the Holy Spirit instructs Christians to “withdraw yourself” from such people (1 Tim. 6:5).
5. It is easy for us to get caught up in speculating about others.
- A. This typically leads to gossip and a variety of additional sins.
  - B. Such speculation and ruinous reasoning is forbidden by the word of God.
6. **4** Let us carefully and correctly identify and put away and avoid the sin of “evil surmisings”!

## II. DISCUSSION: “evil surmisings”...

### I. **5** Draw conclusions based on conjecture and speculation:

- A. True agape love rejoices in the truth and thinks the best of others; it doesn’t “jump to conclusions” before getting the facts, but the sin of “evil surmisings” relies on assumptions, innuendos and the reckless handling of facts.
- B. Because “evil surmisings” rely on supposition and imagination to draw its conclusions, it is bound to produce distrust and create disputes.
  - (1) Have you ever been the target of “evil surmisings”? How did it make you feel?
  - (2) Once a person whose heart is full of “evil surmisings” has made up his mind, it becomes very hard for him to reform and renounce his deeply held suspicions. Why?
  - (3) The reason is because pride (a companion of “evil surmisings”; **Prov. 16:18-19:** “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. 19 Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.”)
- C. What a dreadfully ugly sin!
  - (1) We need to give people the “benefit of the doubt,” and not make our judgments about them based on hearsay, conjecture, innuendo or speculation!
  - (2) We don’t want to be treated that way, so we shouldn’t treat others that way! **Matt. 7:12:** “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (cf. **Jn. 7:24:** “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”)

2. **6** Spread contention and division while destroying unity and peace:

- A. Christians are to “seek peace and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:11).
- B. The gospel teaches us to “pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another,” a principle that is not being practiced by one given to “evil surmisings” (Rom. 14:19).
- C. Having and acting upon a “evil surmisings” toward a fellow Christian spreads an atmosphere of mistrust, doubt and reservation thus obscuring the unity we share in Christ (**Eph. 4:1-3**: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”).
- D. This brings us back to the “Golden Rule” (Matt. 7:12); how do want to be treated?
  - (1) Do you want others to constantly “jump to conclusions” about your motives?
  - (2) Or, do you want them to give you the “benefit of the doubt”?
  - (3) We need the attitude Paul described in **Philippians 2:1-4**: “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

3. **7** Stifle encouragement:

- A. Christians should “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,” but evil suspicion prevents this work of encouragement (Heb. 10:24).
- B. It prevents productive communication instead of enhancing it.
  - (1) Barnabas showed himself to be the son of encouragement by not being suspicious toward Saul and his genuine conversion.
  - (2) He stepped forward and stood with his faithful brother in the Lord:  
**Acts 4:36**: “And Ioses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,”  
**Acts 9:26-27**: “And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.”
- C. Let us follow His example!

4. **8** Wound and ruin rather than soothe and heal:

- A. The person consumed with “evil surmisings” against another is not a peacemaker (Matt. 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.”).
- B. Strife and turmoil is the fruit borne by the one with “evil surmisings”; the stirring up of “strife” is an egregious sin in the eyes of the Lord!  
**Prov. 16:28**: “A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.”  
**Prov. 17:19**: “He who loves transgression loves strife, And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction.”  
**Prov. 28:25**: “He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered.”
- C. Recall Paul’s words (1 Tim. 6:3-5): A person who stirs up “strife” with “evil surmisings” is:

- (1) One who does not “consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.”
  - (2) One who is “of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth...”
  - (3) One from whom we are instructed to “withdraw thyself”!
- D. So it is of good reason that we withdraw ourselves from such people as that are consumed with evil suspicions because they are not a peacemaker (Matt. 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.”); but rather are “A perverse man” who “separates the best of friends.”

5. **9** Put away evil surmisings:

- A. Cultivate love by always acting in the best interests of others—regardless of their words and deeds (recall Phil. 2:1-4?).
- B. This is the true meaning and expression of agape love: **Rom. 5:8**: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”  
**1 Jn. 4:10-11**: “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. I I Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”
- C. Put away evil suspicions by always being determined to judge righteously, not by appearance (Jn. 7:24).  
**Prov. 18:13**: “He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.”  
**Prov. 18:17**: “The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.”
- D. Make your judgments about others based on:
  - (1) Facts and not rumor, suspicions, innuendo, speculation (Jn. 7:24).
  - (2) Put other’s interests before yours (remember Phil. 2:1-4 and the example of Jesus; Phil. 2:5-8).
  - (3) When forming your judgment of others be sure to follow the “Golden Rule.”
- E. Don’t be part of the “gossip grapevine” or the “rumor mill”: reject baseless suspicions and charges against brethren (cf. **1 Tim. 5:19-20**: “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. 20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”).

### III. CONCLUSION: **10**

- 1. Is your life characterized by true agape love?  
**1 Cor. 13:4-8a**: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails.”
- 2. Do you practice the “Golden Rule” when forming judgments about others? Matt. 7:12
- 3. Do you jump to conclusions, follow the “gossip grapevine,” tune into the “rumor mill”; or do you get all the facts and make “righteous judgment[s]”? Jn. 7:24
- 4. “Evil surmisings” is an ugly and awful sin; may we guard our hearts and minds against it!  
**Gal. 2:20**: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”
- 5. Are you “conformed to the image of His Son”? Rom. 8:29

Adapted from an article (*Evil Suspicions*) by Joe R. Price.