

## Ecclesiastes 4:4

## First RPC Durham

**I. Exposition of the Text**

- A.** The Meaning of the Text and Context (vv 4-6)
- B.** Widespread application of the text
- C.** What is *envy*, *jealousy*, or *zeal* (as the word means in Hebrew)?
  - 1)** The virtuous use of the word in Hebrew: The jealousy of God (Dt 29:18, 20; Isa 9:7); The zeal of Christ (Psa 69:9; Song 8:6); The zeal of the godly (Num 25:11; Psa 119:139)
  - 2)** Need to distinguish sinful envy from godly industry
  - 3)** The sin of envy properly considered, defined and diagnosed

**II. Doctrines from the Text**

- A.** The sinfulness of envy, in that it is directly contrary to the Christian faith and Law of God
  - 1)** Because envy is the imitation of Satan and not God (Isa 14:13-15)
  - 2)** Because the providence of God is a good gift.
  - 3)** Because our sufficiency is of God, not ourselves or our possessions.
  - 4)** Because our work is unto the Lord and not unto man (Col 3:23-24)
  - 5)** Because we are, by nature, unprofitable servants. (Mt 20:1-16)
  - 6)** Because we are, by nature, pilgrims.
  - 7)** Because we are to work for the good of the city of our sojourning, not ourselves (Jer 29:7; 1 Pt 2:13)
  - 8)** Because success does not necessarily indicate salvation and sanctification (Lk 7:4-5).
- B.** The seriousness of envy, in that it leads to a multitude of sin (Rev 8:11)
  - 1)** Idolatry
  - 2)** Anger (Pr 6:34)
  - 3)** Greed
  - 4)** Injustice towards workers
  - 5)** Disobedience to the law for your gain
  - 6)** Backbiting and gossiping (Jms 3:8-10)
  - 7)** Missing the joy of friendship
  - 8)** Missing the joy of work (Eccl 2:24)
  - 9)** Neglect of charity toward our neighbour
  - 10)** Neglect of our weightier duties
  - 11)** It was the sin of envy that brought about the crucifixion of Jesus, our blessed Redeemer (Mk 15:10)
  - 12)** Envy leads ultimately to death (Rev 9:7)

**C. The vanity of the spoils of envy**

- 1)** Because industry from envy counterintuitively leads to idleness.
- 2)** Because envy does not allow one to enjoy the fruits of one's toil.
- 3)** Because it comes from envy, which is never satisfied (Pr 27:20)
- 4)** Because such a person already has their reward.
- 5)** Because the work might fail in the person's life.
- 6)** Because it will end either destroyed in history or taken over for the benefit of the church.
- 7)** Because it will only perpetuate the cycle of envy and thus become surpassed by another's work of envy.
- 8)** Because it will be left to another (Eccl 2:21)
- 9)** Because it comes from envy, and therefore will not withstand the fire of judgment at the last day (1 Cor 3:13-15)

**III. Answering Objections to the Text**

- A.** Objection 1: But does the desire for improvement or work of industry indicate envy?
- B.** Objection 2: But may I make use of the gains which were previously gotten by envy? Four cases of conscience:
  - 1)** There is the instance of food sacrificed to idols, wherein you do not need to ask but simply to be thankful (1 Cor 10:27)
  - 2)** There is the instance of your own gains, wherein you should make restitution but then put to good use what is left (Lk 19:8).
  - 3)** The Lord may at times empty the coffers of the wicked in order to bless the Church.
  - 4)** While Christians may make use of the fruits of envy, we are never permitted to support the industry of idolatry and envy (Acts 19:27).
- C.** Objection 3: But how may I be delivered from the bondage of my envy? (1 Jn 1:9).

**IV. Uses from the Text — Remedies against envy**

- A.** Self-Examination
- B.** Contentment
- C.** Thankfulness with others for what they have.
- D.** Humility.
- E.** Not thinking of yourself.
- F.** Service towards others (Rom 12:9-10)
- G.** Have a balance in your life, if at all possible (Eccl 7:16)
- H.** Community and friendship.
- I.** Looking to Christ.
- J.** Looking to heaven and the sure hope of the resurrection.