

Charity

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1 Corinthians. 13:1-3 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.

- I. What is charity? We must say something of its meaning first.
 - A. This is the word “agape” and therefore is not referring to love of wife, children, parents, etc., but to mankind in general – thus the word “charity.”
 1. And particularly those who God puts across our path into our life giving us an opportunity to do them good or evil – to influence them toward heaven or hell.
 - B. In a general sense, love, benevolence, good will;
 1. That disposition of heart which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow men, and to do them good.
 2. It includes supreme love to God, and universal good will to men..
 - C. Liberality in judging of men and their actions;
 1. A disposition which inclines men to think and judge favorably, and to put the best construction on the words and actions of others as is possible.
 2. The highest exercise of charity, is charity towards the uncharitable.
 - D. So then charity is mostly about the disposition of our heart toward others.
 1. It is about how we honor and value their soul and their life.
 2. If we do not have charity we will be indifferent and uncaring at best or feel contempt and hatred toward others when they do not comply with our idea of perfection or interfere with our selfishness.
 - E. This is the same word that is used in 1 John.

1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1. Therefore, charity is not an option we may add to our Christian profession to dress it up a little.
2. Charity is the touchstone of Christian profession – its absence is proof that our profession is vain.

- II. There is a strong tendency in men to substitute other things in the place of charity in order to justify themselves and appease their consciences.
 - A. Since men put such high value on gifts and knowledge and faith and sacrifice these are the first things that are mentioned in this passage.
 - B. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels ...
 1. It is impressive to be able to speak other languages.
 2. It is valuable to be able to speak other languages.
 3. But if a person could speak ALL of the languages of men, and yet had a selfish heart that always put itself first, his fabulous ability would only amount to a bunch of noise.
 4. Angels are esteemed to be far above men in power and eloquence and everything else.

5. But if a person could speak with the power and eloquence of an angel it would be only noise if there were no charity behind it.
- C. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge...
 1. Knowledge and understanding of facts and principles is very impressive and persuasive with men.
 2. Being able to teach others knowledge and explain the way things work may cause people to admire us and inspire them to be like us.
 3. But all these gifts will produce no real profit in others unless it is based upon, and exercised with charity.
- D. And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains...
 1. How startling it is that people may manifest such traits of godliness and still be void of God.
 2. If this is possibleit would still be of no value or good effect if it was not combined with charity.
- E. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor.
 1. Generosity and charity are not the same thing – we can be generous, but not charitable.
 - a) Think about it – we can be generous with our stuff and yet void of love in our heart.
- F. And though I give my body to be burned.
 1. We can even go as far as martyrdom in trying to express our zeal and commitment, but be void of the main ingredient – charity.
 2. Who would ever think to question the salvation of someone who was burned at the stake for his faith in Christ?

III. Charity is the mark of a true child of God.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

1 John 2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

- A. If we have experienced the love of God our attitude toward others will be one of charity.
- B. If we have truly received forgiveness from God we will be forgiving ourselves.
 1. And we will seek for others to know God's forgiveness, also.
- C. If we have been born of God our life will manifest a giving heart in all things.
 1. We will be charitable – not simply generous with material things.
 2. We will give people space and think the best of them possible.
 3. We will not be condemning toward anyone – even those who are our enemies and treat us with contempt and hatred.
- D. All efforts to cover ourselves with other gifts, abilities, and exercises of faith will be in vain and will not stand the judgment of God.
- E. Bottom line is – if God lives in our heart we will have a heart that loves in deed and in truth, not just in word.

Romans 5:5 ... because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.