

It's About How We Love, Not What We Do

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Straight Paths Bible Church

1 Corinthians 12:29-31 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

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. We seem to always hear the chapter on charity apart from its context, which is spiritual gifts.
 - A. 1 Corinthians 13 is tucked between chapters 12 and 14, which deal extensively with spiritual gifts.
 - B. The Scripture we just read makes it clear that spiritual gifts are real, and it is good to desire them, but there is a more excellent way, and something to be sought after that is infinitely more important than any of the spiritual gifts.
 - C. We are all familiar with 1 Corinthians 13, which talks about charity, or love, and more precisely, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. (Romans 5:5)
 - D. We all know that the main thing we come away from that chapter with is the fact that without charity everything else we do is vain, even to giving our body to be burned.
 - E. So eternal rewards will be based **on how we love**, not on any great work that we built, or any great thing we accomplished, or any great abilities we had.
 - F. Jesus said the greatest commandment concerns **how we love**; first God, and then our fellow men.

- II. It seems to me that modern Christianity is completely off the rails in this matter.
 - A. It is popular to talk about love and give lip service to the fact that Christians should love one another, as well as others.
 - B. But when it comes to how a Christian should live his life, it is much more common to hear a different criteria put forth.
 - C. Most people seem to be under the impression that they have to “do” something; if they do not “have a job” in the church, or do not do some great thing, or have some outstanding ability, they are an inferior Christian, at best.
 - D. Most people feel that way because most of what we have heard since we have been in church is more like motivational speaking than preaching of the Gospel.
 1. We have been given the impression that everyone should be a preacher, a deacon, a missionary, or a teacher, or else they are just not a part of the work of God.
 - E. This whole passage concerning spiritual gifts is dealing with this misconception about what the Christian life should be about.

1. Not everyone has a spiritual gift to exercise that makes them stand out from the crowd.
 2. But every Christian, without exception, can, and is supposed to have charity.
- F. It is the identifying mark of those who are true disciples of Christ.

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

- G. So it is more important to study and understand the true characteristics of charity than it is to know about and seek after spiritual gifts.

III. The attributes of charity are given clearly in chapter 13 in the context of spiritual gifts.

CHARITY, n.

1. In a general sense, love, benevolence, good will; that disposition of heart which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow men to think favorably of their fellow men, and to do them good. In a theological sense, it includes supreme love to God, and universal good will to men.

- A. Charity will move us to do some things, such as helping in the work of the church, or going to a mission field, preaching the Gospel, or making great sacrifices for the benefit of others, and the furtherance of the Gospel.
- B. But if our motive is to stand out from the crowd, to build a great work for God, or to amount to something for God, love for God and others is not our motive, pride is our true motive and that is because we love ourselves.
- C. Disinterested love is when there is no self-interests involved, but the motive is purely for the good of God's Kingdom and the souls of men,
- D. Charity is disinterested love: "vaunteth not itself" (v. 4) "seeketh not her own" (v. 5)
- E. So anything we do in this life for God will be because we love and not because we want to be somebody for Christ.
 1. If there is the slightest desire in our heart for fame, or recognition, or praise from others, it is not better than doing it for money to put in your pocket.
- F. This is the problem with mission work now.
- G. This is the problem with the work of the churches now.
- H. The young people are either confused, or completely deceived about what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.
 1. They have been programmed from child to "find the will of God for their life" which means which branch of the ministry they are going to be in.
 2. What "great work for God" are they going to build somewhere.
- I. What the young people should be being taught is how to love God and how to love others more than themselves, and let God decide what to do with them.

IV. Charity is the "more excellent way" to live and serve God.

- A. It is universal language that does not need the gift of tongues to express itself.
- B. A preacher may be able to preach heaven down and hell up, but if it is not done purely from a motive of love, it does not count for anything, and God is not in it.
- C. A person can give all they have, and even give their body to be burned with the wrong motive – think about that a minute!
- D. These are the people who are standing in front of Christ as the Judge one day and hear those words, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."