

5 July 2015

The gifts of the Spirit are nothing without charity (Charity Pt 1)

Introduction.

We begin a study on the word “charity” in the Holy Scriptures. Please do not attempt this study in a corrupt copy of the Scriptures because you will be disappointed, the word has been **changed**.

Four points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

1. We can have knowledge, but knowledge puffs us up, whereas charity edifies, and
2. We can speak with tongues of angels, but without charity our words are as sounding brass, and
3. We can understand all mysteries, and have all faith, but without charity, we are nothing, and
4. We can bestow our goods to feed the poor, but without charity, we gain nothing.

Meanings and occurrences of key words.

* The word “charity” only occurs in the New Testament and is derived from only one Greek word “agape”, which is also translated: charitably, feast of charity, dear, and love. The Oxford dictionary definition includes: “Christian love of fellow men; kindness, natural affection”. The biblical meaning of charity will be established in studies 2–4.

Our four points in more detail.

1. We can have knowledge, but knowledge puffs us up, whereas charity edifies.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.8: 1 “Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”

Context and meaning of our verse.

* This letter to the Corinthian church begins with Paul pointing out that there are divisions in the church (1Cor.1: 10). Paul continues his letter pointing out that we are all labourers, and we need to build on the foundation which is Christ (not Peter), and we are not to glory in men (3: 21). Then in 4: 18 Paul says that some of them are puffed up. Chapter 5 Paul identifies the immorality in the church, with a call to flee fornication in 1Cor.6: 16, and one way to avoid fornication is for a man to have his own wife (1Cor.7: 2). He then adds his own commandments (7: 25 – 40). Then we have our verse which is the start of chapter 8, where he begins a new topic concerning “things offered unto idols”, he points out that we “all have knowledge, but knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.” He is saying that in the law there is room for a man to puff himself up because of the knowledge he has in the law, but the Spirit which is needed to show charity: “against such there is no law” (Gal.5: 23).

Other scriptural support.

1Cor.13: 2.

Application of our verse today.

* Each of our points in this teaching are from the same letter that Paul was writing to the Gentile Corinthian church, and so this point and each that follows is doctrinally applicable to us today.

Illustration.

* I will never forget a New Testament lecturer at BCNZ who had a doctorate of Theology, and now is a Professor in Restorative justice at Victoria University. He appeared to bring a fresh new insight to the Pauline epistles, where he suggested we treat them as letters that we only have one side of from Paul and not the reply from the church, that were written for a particular issue in the church at the time. Therefore not all of the letters apply to us today because we do not have the same issues.

* In the last year of study I was asked to pop over and do some electrical work at his home and so I agreed. During my time in his home we chatted about what I was planning to do after college, and I indicated that I was thinking of doing my masters, and he pointed out that I would only ever be an electrician and did not have what it took to undertake either masters or PHD study.

Learning from our Illustration.

* Was the Professor puffed up because of his knowledge, his “fresh new insight”, or did he build me up (Phil.2: 3)? I know I am nothing because in that same year I was still writing my essays and forgetting to include a verb in sentences (mainly because I didn’t know what a verb was). And I know that the lecturer had more knowledge than I did, but when we put others down to build ourselves up, we are not showing charity, we are puffing ourselves up.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Let us always remember that our flesh loves being “vainly puffed” up (Col.2: 18) and for those that know the truth of the Authorised Bible, one of our daily battles is having that knowledge, and not allowing ourselves to be puffed up by knowing we know the truth, but rather building others up from where they are, by asking them questions, and doing so with meekness. Let us also remember that it is a fine line between sharing the truth and puffing ourselves up! Never forget that we can have all the knowledge pertaining to the truth of the scriptures but if we appear to “know it all” then our audience will be deaf to our words. But if we help others to grow in their knowledge then we will edify. Because knowledge puffs us up, whereas charity edifies.

2. We can speak with tongues of men and angels, but if we have no charity, our words are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.13: 1 “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.”

Context and meaning of our verse.

* In chapter nine of this letter Paul establishes the validity of his apostleship. In chapter ten he sets out some guidelines for the Lord’s supper, then in chapter 11 he makes the plea for them to be “followers of me, even as I am of Christ.” And then carries on to expound a little more on the rules surrounding the Lord’s supper when “ye come together”. In chapter 12 Paul begins a new topic: “spiritual gifts”, a theme that is carried through to the end of chapter 14. And in the middle we have chapter 13, and specifically our verse 1, where Paul points out that “though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” Hence, even though he had received a gift from God to speak in the tongues of men and angels his words cannot be heard because of the noise of his lack of charity,.

Illustration.

* Imagine speaking in Hebrew (a language unknown to yourself), by the Holy Spirit of God, and our audience being wowed by the power of God. But then you show no charity toward your brother in front of the same audience. Anything you say afterward would be heard as sounding brass, as a tinkling cymbal, because the noise from your lack of charity would be what the audience is left with.

Learning from our Illustration.

* Whatever gift we have been given can be overshadowed when we show a lack of charity, and any benefit to the believers and the heathen will be destroyed if we “have not charity”.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Speak words that match your actions, otherwise speak not at all, lest your lack of charity cause your words to be heard as an out of tune orchestra playing in the dark, just cymbals and brass.

3. We can have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and have all faith, yet if we have not charity, we are nothing.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.13: 2 “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.”

Illustration.

* In our previous fortnightly study we concluded a teaching on the mysteries of God. Hence, we now have an understanding of the ten mysteries in the Scriptures. However, upon conclusion of the series a brother pointed out 1Cor.13: 2 which says “though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries...and have not charity, I am nothing.”

Learning from our Illustration.

* I was so grateful for the teaching on the mysteries of God, but I was more thankful that a beloved brother in Christ pointed me to our verse, because as much as I may think I have been a good steward of the mysteries of God, if I neglect charity in my daily walk with my brethren, I am nothing!

Challenge & or encouragement.

* The Lord Jesus said, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”
* But Paul is saying to the church, though we “have all faith, and have not charity, we **are** nothing.” Hence why, for Paul the greatest of “faith, hope, charity...[is] charity” (1Cor 13:13). So yes it is a joy when we see each other’s faith being strengthened, and us understanding all mysteries, but let us remember that we can have all these things, but if we “have not charity, we are nothing.”

4. We can bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give our body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits us nothing.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.13: 3 “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.”

Illustration.

* The Roman Catholic church holds up Mother Teresa, as a woman to be revered for her selfless devotion to the poor in India, and have begun their canonisation process to make her a saint. Protestants would say, but her giving up of all her worldly goods to feed the poor contributes nothing to her salvation if she never believed the gospel of Christ, was never in Christ.

* But Paul would say to us Protestants today, your giving up of all your goods to feed the poor, or our body to be burnt is worthless if we have no charity, it will profit us no reward in heaven.

Learning from our Illustration.

* A man can toil in his work, he can bestow all his goods to feed the poor, he can give his body to be burned (both of which are pretty full on, in terms of commitment), but such work will not abide (1Cor 3:14) for him to receive a reward if he has no charity, for his works will profit him nothing.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* The Lord Jesus told the man with “great possessions” to “go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven” (Matt.19: 21 & 22). But the man turned away because he had many possessions.

* Paul is saying in this age, your reward for such works will be nothing, if you neglect charity.

Do you want, do you thirst for charity, above knowledge, faith, and above hope?

To fulfil that need, that thirst for charity we have to first understand **exactly** what charity is, to enable us to be proficient at implementing it in our daily lives. And that is what we will examine in our next study on the word “charity”.

So let us summarise our four points that motivate us to desire charity above all.

1. We can have knowledge, but knowledge puffs us up, whereas charity edifies, and
2. We can speak with tongues of angels, but without charity our words are as sounding brass, and
3. We can understand all mysteries, and have all faith, but without charity, we are nothing, and
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