

19th of July 2015

The Biblical meaning of Charity (Charity Pt 2)

Introduction.

This is our second study on the word “charity” in the Scriptures.

Previous 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.
We concluded our first study, asking: “Do you...thirst for charity, above knowledge, faith, and hope?” We pointed out that “To fulfil...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.”

Four points from the Scriptures that contribute to the biblical meaning of charity.

1. Charity suffereth long, and
2. Charity is kind, and
3. Charity envieth not, and
4. Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

Our four points in more detail.

1. Charity suffereth long.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.13: 4 “Charity suffereth long,”

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Each of our points in this teaching are from 1Corinthians chapter 13, and so the context that is established in this first point will be applicable to each point that follows.

* Chapter 13 is set “surprisingly” between chapters 12 and 14 where the context is spiritual gifts. In our previous study we looked at the first three verses of chapter thirteen where Paul established the need for charity beyond any spiritual gift, faith, and giving of our goods to the poor. He then explains what charity is and begins with verse 4: “charity suffereth long.”

Other Scriptural support.

1Cor.13: 7 & 2Cor.6: 6.

Scriptural examples.

* David suffered long with Saul in face of Saul trying to kill him, where he refused to lift up his hand against the “Lord’s anointed”, time after time (1Sam.24: 6, 10, 26: 9 & 11).

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.

* Ever since I got 32% in “School Certificate” English I knew that writing and reading did not come naturally for me. When I got saved, and felt the Lord calling me to go to Bible College, and the degree was attained through writing essays, I knew I was outside of my skill base. One of the legacies of my lack of basic English was poor grammar and syntax (sentence structure). My mentor over the past 15 years who has taught me the fundamentals of **Biblical** Christianity, has had to ‘hold my hand’ during these past 8 –9 years of providing church teachings. He has looked past the repeated mistakes, and the need for repeated instruction to correct them.

Learning from our Illustration.

* We are encouraged to show longsuffering toward our brethren, to suffer with them in their short comings, like my mentor does me. He may have seen improvement in my writing over 8 years, but it is not a short time he has helped to bear my burden, and in doing so he has shown me charity.

There is no timeframe for suffering with a brother, and there is no limit on how much we are to suffer with him. If our longsuffering doesn't prompt us to pray for him, and battle with our flesh to maintain the suffering, then perhaps we are not longsuffering. And given that longsuffering is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5: 22) do not expect to produce such fruit if you do not walk in the Spirit (Gal.5: 25). Because the action of longsuffering is impossible in man's strength, but all things are possible with God.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* That which is greater than hope and faith is charity, one for another. And when we suffer long with our brother we show him charity and are obedient to the Scriptures. So, when there is an opportunity to suffer long with your brother, don't ask the Lord for it to end, but rather, ask for strength to suffer their weaknesses in love as my mentor has done with me for the past 8 plus years, And if we look back and see that it has been 2 or 20 years, then you can thank the Lord for **His** strength to show charity to your brother. For when we suffer long we show charity.

2. Charity is kind.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.13: 4 "Charity suffereth long, [and] is kind,"

Other scriptural support.

2Cor.6: 6 & 2Pet.1: 7.

Illustration.

* I know of a brother who does not like accolades for his efforts, but before my time of knowing him he helped two French families beyond any level of kindness that I have ever heard of before. In the first example he heard about a Christian couple in France where the government made up charges against them and took their children. Following the news of their plight, this brother travelled to France and made petition before the Government for the release of their children.

Learning from our Illustration.

* The only reason a worldly man would show such kindness would be to gain something for his effort. Yet, our brother who laboured for others has done so with his only purpose to serve His God, and the needs of his brethren. Such acts of kindness reveal to those who have a discerning heart, that this man, understands and acts out in his life, charity to his brethren, by his kindness.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Paul says: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom.12: 10). If we are to prefer spending time with our brethren, then we will need to be kind toward them. That doesn't mean we all have to go to the lengths our brother went to in our illustration, but when opportunities arise for us to show kindness, let us not withdraw, or cut corners, but rather let us show kindness appropriate for our situation, that we would obey our God and His commandment to show charity, remembering to add "to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Pet.1: 7, 8).

3. Charity envieth not.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.13: 4 "Charity suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not".

Illustration.

* When Karen and I were at Bible College there was a lecturer who had a PHD, and left to work at Lincoln University. where shortly after he became an Associate Professor, and is today a Professor. I am not saying that he only left because he aspired to the title of "Professor", but it is interesting that at BCNZ there is no room for the lecturers to hold such titles as there is in worldly universities.

Learning from our Illustration.

* One of the benefits in the body of Christ is each believer is a member of that body, and each has a gift according to their function and are encouraged, by the virtue of the biblical picture of the body (1Cor.12: 27), **not** to envy the gifts of their brethren, because it is God that has given us all a place in the body of Christ. But in worldly organisations like universities or religions of the world like Roman Catholicism their structures encourage envy, jealousy, and covetousness between those in that institution. Their flesh cannot help themselves, they desire, what the world knows to be “survival of the fittest”, to want what others have, and more, to be better, faster, and so trample over the poor. That is not Christian, that is fleshly. Believers are encouraged to, **not** envy their brethren, when they do so they walk charitably, because charity envieth not.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Paul said: “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts” (1Tim.6: 9). For us to show charity to our brother we must first be content with what we have, then we will not envy what is our brothers, and we will show him charity, because charity envieth not.

4. Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.13: 4 “Charity suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,”

Illustration.

* The doctrines of all false man-made religions claim that their adherents get to heaven by their good works, whether they be Muslim, Roman Catholics, or the Jehovah’s Witnesses. I remember speaking to one of my customers about religion, and he told me he was Roman Catholic. He spent the remainder of our time telling me of the work he does in the church, how he had his name mentioned in a church booklet. He boasted of his work, hoping to off-set this sin, with his works.

Learning from our Illustration.

* The man’s error was two-fold:

i) For a bible believer, he refers to Eph.2: 8 & 9 and immediately understands the benefits of works for salvation, it is “not of works, lest any man should boast.” Hence, the man in our illustration follows his church’s teaching on salvation by works, which means he is no better than the heathen.
ii) In his desire to share his works he puffs himself up. He is not boasting of Christ (2Cor.11: 10), but rather is like the heathen who as “workers of iniquity boast themselves” (Ps.94: 4).

* Whereas believers we are to “not...think [of men] above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another” (1Cor.4: 6). And for a believer who seeks to show charity toward his brethren the Scriptures say that “charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” So when every second word in conversation with your brother is about yourself, be encouraged to stop, and think of something genuine that would uplift your brother, and in all “lowliness of mind...esteem other better than themselves”.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* If you are going to puff anyone up, let it be Christ or your brother, but never yourself. Never seek to compete or strive to beat your brother, to be faster, work longer, read more books, read the bible through more times than he. Why? Because “the servant of the Lord must not strive” (2Tim.2: 24), and he is to show fervent charity to his brethren, and part of charity, is that he vaunteth not himself, “is not puffed up.”

Something to think about for our next teaching in this series: How does acting unseemly toward our brother show a lack of charity? (because that is one of our points in our next study).

Summary of our four points.

1. Charity suffereth long, and
2. Charity is kind, and
3. Charity envieth not, and
4. Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.