

30 August 2015

Charity the bond of perfectness (Charity Pt 5)

Introduction.

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

Previous study.

(1) Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, and (2) charity beareth all things, and (3) charity believeth all things, and charity hopeth all things.

Three points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

(1) Charity endures all things, and (2) charity never fails, and (3) when we show charity to our brethren we put on the bond of perfectness.

Our three points in more detail.

1. Charity endures all things.

Supporting verse.

1Cor.13: 7 “Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Our first two points in this teaching are from 1Corinthians chapter 13, and so the context that is established in this first point will be applicable the second. In 1Cor.13: 1–3 Paul established the need for charity beyond any spiritual gift, faith, and giving of our goods to the poor.

* Verse 4 points out that charity: “suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is **not** puffed up.” Verse 5 points out that charity: “doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.” Verse 6 points out that charity: “rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth”. The first three statements in verse 7 were covered in our previous study and continued with the meaning of charity. The phrase (charity) “endureth all things”, supports our point that charity endureth all things.

* To understand what it means to “endure” all things, we ask what word is often used in conjunction with endure? And we find that “for ever” (1Pet.1: 25) and “to the end” (Matt.10: 22) are frequently associated with endure. Applying that meaning to the context of charity toward our brethren, we are to endure all things to the end.

Scriptural examples.

* The greatest example in the Scriptures of a person enduring all things for his brethren is the Lord Jesus Christ, who “endured the cross” (Heb.12: 2).

Application of our verse today.

* Each of our points in this teaching are from the letters of Paul that he wrote to the Gentile church, and so this point and each that follows is doctrinally applicable to us today.

Illustration.

* Imagine if you were born into a family where Mum was a drug addict and became pregnant. The little baby would have drugs in his system from birth, he would forever be drawn to take drugs and struggle every day of his life with the taint that his mother passed onto him. But nevertheless you are in the same family, he is your brother. and you desire to show him charity.

Learning from our Illustration.

* In this example, do you walk out on your illegitimate brother and your drug-addicted mother when you are able to work, because you consider them to be a lost cause? Or, do you simply love them, care for them, not for a week, nor a month, nor for a year but until the end? Many people in family situations, where one member wrongs another member, there usually is an unwillingness to forgive, and therefore an inability to endure anything for a minute or days, let alone “to the end” or “forever”.

* But that is what we are required to show our brother in Christ, we are to endure “to the end” all things, which is charity.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* This test of your endurance is not like a three-hour exam, a four-hour marathon, or a 27-day Outward Bound course where there is a time limit and the hardship you endure will then be over. No, the need for you to endure your brethren and their weaknesses may never end. Are you up for this challenge? If you think it is too far out of reach and so there is no point in trying, think again. Because God gave us His Holy Spirit, and when we walk in the Spirit as we see with the fruits of the Spirit of longsuffering, such endurance is achievable in the Lord, so be encouraged to endure **all** things for your brethren.

2. Charity never fails.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.13: 8 "Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away."

Illustration.

* When unsaved couples marry, when they are joined in wedlock, then the world says it is okay for their marriage to fail (end in divorce) when your love fails, or for **any** other reason.

When one person in an unsaved marriage gets saved, and then their spouse departs, then according to the Scriptures, "let them depart" (1Cor.7: 15), but if they are happy to dwell with the believer then let them dwell (verse 13).

When a saved couple are joined together in Biblical marriage, then their wedlock can only fail due to fornication, or a spouse dies. In the Biblical marriage **God** joins a man and a woman together as one flesh, and "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt.19: 6), and that is the case with the example of my mentor and his wife. This year they will have been married in the eyes of God and the world for 49 years. They are an example of a man and woman whom **God** hath brought together to be one flesh that no man can put asunder. Why? Because they do things their own way, or they read books like "Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus" for advice? NO!

Their example of biblical wedlock has not failed because they both recognise their God-given role (according to the Scriptures), and they both know their place, and the hierarchy in the relationship, according to the Scriptures, and they both together seek to obey the Scriptures, and in doing so are obedient to their Lord and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Learning from our Illustration.

* A marriage between a Christian man and woman is an example of charity to believers of all ages, in many ways, but specifically with reference to this point, because:

- i) what God joins together, let no man put asunder, i.e. it never fails, and charity never fails.
- ii) one spouse is recognised as the weaker vessel (1Pet.3: 7), and so needs to be loved and cherished by the other, as is so often the case between brethren, where one is weaker than the other. Our Christian couple show biblical charity one to the other, as brother and sister in the Lord, and have done so for 49 years, and are an example to the brethren, for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* If you want counsel on how to show charity, with the knowledge that charity never fails, then ask a Christian married couple, who together seek to be obedient to the Holy scriptures and what God wants from them in their role in the marriage. Because in the body of Christ that is how brethren are to show charity one to the other, as if there was no end to showing the other charity. Even though tongues shall cease, knowledge shall cease, and prophecies fail, charity between brethren never fails.

3. When we show charity to our brethren we put on the bond of perfectness.

Supporting Verses.

Col.3: 14 "And above all these things [put on] charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Context and meaning of our verse.

* "Seek those things which are above" (verse 1). "Set your affection on the things above" (verse 2). "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (verse 3). "Mortify therefore your bodies" (verse 4). "Lie not one to another" (verse 9), because you have "put off the old man with his deeds" (verse 9), and "have put on the new man" (verse 10). Having put off the old man the believer is called to put on "bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (verse 12), and verse 13 continues "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Then our verse, which is like a pinnacle of all that has gone before: "put on charity", which includes longsuffering and kindness (which are the first two points of verse 4), but according to 1Cor.13: 4-8 is much more, and when shown to our brethren is greater than all that was in the previous verses, because it "is the bond of perfectness." The meaning of the word "bond" can be seen by its use in Eph.4: 3 where it means "uniting principle", hence what unites two brothers in perfectness is charity.

Illustration.

* Back to our previous illustration of the godly Christian couple that have been married for 49 years this year: We all know that there are marriages between non-Christians that surpass 50 years, but it must be hit and miss for them with how their marriage is going to turn out given that their natural flesh seeks those things which are of the earth, and they set their affections on things like money, power and pleasures. Add to that: many couples do not understand forgiveness, and a 33% failure rate of marriage in New Zealand and the non-Christian couple would have little confidence that they will last 50 years. So why have our godly Christian couple stayed together so long?

Learning from our Illustration.

* The godly Christian couple that have been married for 49 years seek to obey the Scriptures, they have shown with their deeds that they have sought the things which are above, and set their affections on the things above, they have mortified their bodies, not lied one to another, have forgiven one another, and above all these things, shown each other charity, which is the bond of perfectness. That which is perfect is in unity, it is not in confusion and so when our Christian couple show charity to each other they have a bond of perfectness, it is impenetrable by the devil. Without it, a couple, whether Christian, or not will always be prone to attack by Satan. Hence, the Christian married couple who show charity one to the other are an example to their brethren of how to show charity one to the other. And when there is charity between brethren, there is no division, there is a bond of perfectness.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* The biblical marriage relationship where a brother and sister in Christ seek to obey God's words together is an example of charity between brethren. It never fails, it endures all things, hopes all things, believes all things, beareth all things, rejoiceth in the truth, and not in iniquity (hence both need to have the same measure for sin), thinketh no evil of the other, is not easily provoked by the other, seeketh not her own, does not behave unseemly, is not puffed up, vaunteth not itself, envieth not the other, is kind and suffers long. That is the bond, that is the uniting principle of perfectness for those who are one flesh in Christ. We are all encouraged today to show our brethren charity, like the married couple show each other. Now that is a challenge, especially for those who are single and do not, nor have not seen, an example of a couple serve Christ by obedience to the Book. But that is our challenge, to show charity in our relationships with our brethren and in doing so we put on the bond, the unity of perfectness. To God be the glory!

Summary of our three points.

(1) Charity endures all things, and (2) charity never fails, and (3) when we show charity to our brethren we put on the bond of perfectness.