

13 September 2015.

The importance of Charity (Charity Pt 6)

Introduction.

This is our sixth study on the word “charity” in the Scriptures. We have previously covered the meaning of “charity” and will now establish the importance of charity between brethren.

In our previous study we completed the meaning of the word charity.

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

Three points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

(1) Faith, hope, and charity, the greatest of these is charity, and (2) charity covereth a multitude of sins, and (3) the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart.

Our three points in more detail.

1. Faith, hope, and charity, the greatest of these is charity.

Supporting verse.

1Cor.13: 13 “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity.”

Context and meaning of our verse.

* In 1Cor.13: 1–3 Paul established the need for charity beyond any spiritual gift, faith, and giving of our goods to the poor. In verse 4 he points out that charity: “suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” Verse 5 charity: “doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.” Verse 6 charity: “rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth”. Verse 7 charity “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things” and then “endureth all things” was used for our first point in our previous study. Verse 8 “Charity never faileth:” and then continues to identify other things that will fail, that include: “prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” When shall they fail? Verse 9 and 10 says, “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” So, when did prophecies fail, when did tongues cease, and when did knowledge vanish away? When that which is perfect is come. There is debate about who or what “that which is perfect” is, whether the Lord Jesus Christ, or the completed perfect scriptures. And there is not sufficient space to discuss the different understandings and their merits. Verses 11 and 12 are also a reference to now we know in part, and it compares it to “then” (when that which is perfect is come) “shall I know even as also I am known.” Then we have our verse” And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.”

Application of our verse today.

* Our verse is from the letters of Paul that he wrote to the Gentile church, and so this point is doctrinally applicable to us today.

Illustration.

* Imagine you are a staunch KJV defender and you witness to a young man who receives Christ, and before he comes to the knowledge of the truth that scripture is preserved for us today in the AB1611, he fellowships with, and joins a Brethren assembly where they have just moved away from the sole authority of the Authorised Bible. Do you encourage his faith, and his hope, albeit they are not realised in a perfect, preserved book, or do you cast him off to the wolves?

Learning from our Illustration.

* Just because we have a copy of the perfect preserved scriptures does not mean that we do not need faith or hope, And today, you can have **much** faith in the book, you can have **great** hope in its promises, and yet because of your insistence on the 1611AB, you show little charity to your weaker brother. The scriptures do not say that faith is the greatest of these three, nor hope is the greatest, but instead “the greatest of these is charity”. That means we do not cast him off to the wolves, because he is hard work, but we are longsuffering, kind, and not easily provoked. Challenge & or encouragement.

* Be ye challenged by those who disagree, in your hope, and faith in the scriptures and the promises contained within them. Be encouraged to seek God's help to put into practice the scriptural truth that charity is the greatest of these three, and rather than insisting on your brethren hoping, and believing (having faith) in the promises (including preservation of God's words), why don't you ask God for strength, and wisdom to show charity. The importance of charity is clear: out of faith, hope, and charity, the greatest of these is charity (toward our brethren).

2. Charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Supporting Verse.

1Pet.4: 8 "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

Context and meaning of our verse.

* As Christ suffered for us in the flesh, He requires those who believe in Him to live the rest of their lives not in "the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (verse 2). Peter is admitting that they (Jews) "have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness..." (verse 3), "wherein they" (the Gentiles), "think it strange that ye" (Jews) "run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (Verse 4). Verse 5 points out that they shall give an account to the Lord who will "judge the quick and the dead." Verse 6 is hard to understand: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead". Does this mean that the dead have another opportunity to hear the "gospel preached"? No, this is a reference to when the Lord (after His death) went down into the graves, to Abraham's bosom where the Jews that were saved prior to Christ's redemption on the cross went after death because they were not cleansed of sin. So, keeping in mind that we shall give an account (verse 5), "be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." Then we have our verse, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (verse 8). Hence the importance of charity between the Jews is that it shall cover a "multitude of sins", when they sin against each other.

Other scriptural support.

In a similar way, the Old Testament teaches the Jew that "love covereth all sins" (Prov.10: 12).

Application of our verse today.

* According to 1Pet.2: 12 and 4: 3 Peter's audience is the Jew, but as we know much of the letter is complimentary to Paul's epistles to the Gentile church and in this case his teaching on charity. Hence, regardless of the age, "fervent charity among" brethren will cover a multitude of sins.

Illustration.

* Have you ever heard of the saying: "love is blind", and we see this in Prov.10: 12 "love covereth all sins." Hence, the one being loved does not see all the warts that a stranger sees. In a marriage relationship like the 49 years for my mentor, he will know his wife's weaknesses as she will know his, it is not that they cannot, or choose not to see them, but rather their charity, their longsuffering, their kindness to each other, their rejoicing in the truth, means that the multitude of sins of the other are covered.

Learning from our Illustration.

* We can love our spouse, but not actually show them kindness, we can love our wife and never suffer long with their weaknesses, or bear their burdens and for most people that are outside of Christ, charity between a married couple as an objective would not be on their wish list. But for believers like my mentor who believes the Book, who shows charity to his spouse, covers the multitude of sins of that spouse by his charity. He does not say her sins are not transgressions of the law, because that would not be rejoicing in the truth. Such a biblically based marriage is an example of how brethren are to show fervent charity among themselves and in doing so cover the multitude of sins.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Charity does not mean that we do not confront our wife's sin or our brother's sin, because, charity means we rejoice in the truth, so with a heart of meekness we seek to restore such a one

“considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal.6: 2). Which means there is a real challenge in marriage and with brethren, to pray and ask the Lord for his timing on when to speak to a brother or our wife about a matter that has overtaken them, to listen, be kind, bearing their burdens, and rejoicing with them in the small steps that show they are turning from their iniquity. Charity is important in our relationships with our brethren because it covers the multitude of sins.

3. The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart.

Supporting Verses.

1Tim.1: 5 “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and [of] a good conscience, and [of] faith unfeigned”.

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Paul establishes his role as an “apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour” (verse 1). And in verse two he affirms that his letter is to Timothy, his son in the faith (verse 2). In verse 3 points out that he charged Timothy to stay at Ephesus that he might charge some that they teach no other doctrine”: (than “my doctrine” – 2Tim.3: 10). And in addition to teaching no other doctrine than what Paul taught they are not to “give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do” (verse 3). Then we have our verse, where in the context of Paul’s epistle he says, “Now the end of the commandment”, which can only refer to what he has just been writing to them about, the end, the pinnacle of Paul’s doctrine is “charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (i.e. faith that is genuine).

Application of our verse today.

* The letter to Timothy is part of Paul’s instruction to the Gentile church, and is therefore applicable to us today.

Illustration.

* Think of a brother who is proud, thinks everyone else needs to change but himself, and he lives with his wife and stepdaughter. His step daughter has come back home to live because she is pregnant and he loves her as his own daughter, but feels that she needs a bit of discipline and order and life would be fine. Everything she does that was not according to how he felt it should be done was criticised, every sentence corrected that was not in context. And remember he does so because he feels in his heart that she needs to change. This was me, 9 years ago.

Learning from our Illustration.

* Our illustration was from a family environment, but it is no different to the body of Christ, the family of God today, where, regardless of our gifting, our ministry, whether it be of preaching or teaching or administration, the end of the commandment is fervent charity out of a pure heart.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Be examples to the young brethren showing fervent charity among yourselves, because charity is the greatest of hope, faith, and charity, and it covers a multitude of sins. And let us be encouraged to show such charity to our brethren out of a pure heart, not like I did, with a critical heart, that sees the mote in our brother’s eye but not the beam in our own (Matt.7: 3). The importance of charity between brethren is clear: the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart.

A question to think about: What does it mean to have a “pure heart”, from which we show charity to our brethren? This will be covered in our next study on charity.

Summary of our three points.

1) Faith, hope, and charity, the greatest of these is charity, and (2) charity covereth a multitude of sins, and (3) the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart.