

Sunday, November 26, 2017—I Corinthians 13:1 Love or Charity? Which Is It?

Introduction

- Last week we concluded our study of I Corinthians 12 by looking at verses 28-31. In doing so we saw how Paul ends the chapter by circling back to a discussion of spiritual gifts. The information about the body of Christ found in verses 12 through 27 is bracketed before and after with a discussion of spiritual gifts.
- From last week's message we observed the following points in summation:
 - There is not one comprehensive/complete listing of all the gifts given to the body of Christ in Paul's epistles. One must compare scripture with scripture to ascertain an understanding of this matter.
 - There appears to be a hierarchy or orderly structure as to how "God hath set some in the church."
 - Not everyone was given the same gift.
 - The Corinthians had become covetous and competitive with respect to the spiritual gifts.
 - Paul is going to show unto the Corinthians a more excellent way than the gifts.
- This morning as we begin to consider chapter 13 we will begin to learn about the "more excellent way" that Paul spoke about at the end of chapter 12.

I Corinthians 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.**
- Paul opens the chapter by stating that even if one can speak with the tongues of men and angels if they do not have "charity" they are all noise and no substance.
- As some of you might already know, I Corinthians 13 is often referred to as the "Love Chapter." In this chapter, within the context of talking about spiritual gifts, Paul expounds upon this issue of love and charity.
- The KJB uses the word "charity" in this passage as opposed to "love" that is found in all modern versions NIV, NASV, and ESV. This has caused many King James Only advocates zero in on the word "charity" and defend that exact word choice over the word "love."

- Let me say at the outset, there is no greater advocate for the superiority of the KJB than myself. I believe it is God’s word for English speaking people and wholeheartedly object to its being changed/alterd by the whims any/every preacher who comes along that doesn’t like one of its readings.
- That being said, I also feel that many King James Only advocates have used poorly conceived, illogical, and factually inaccurate arguments to try and defend the KJB. I believe the KJB is perfect/inerrant in the following sense:
 - I believe in “perfect preservation” if, by perfect, one means the existence of a pure text that does not report information about God, His nature or character, His doctrine, His dispensational dealings with mankind, history, archeology, or science that is FALSE. In short, God’s promise to preserve His word assures the existence of a text that has not been altered in its “character” or “doctrinal content” despite not being preserved in a state of “verbatim identicality.”
- I believe that King James Bible Believers need to advance positions that are in line with the historical and textual FACTS. It is not helpful to our position on the Bible to advance positions that can easily be defeated by someone who possesses a better understanding of the facts. It is not helpful to invent meanings for words that cannot be substantiated by any known English language reference works.
- The use of the “charity” in I Corinthians 13 highlights an instance where King James advocates have felt the need to defend that exact word against the word “love” used in modern versions.
- It is commonly stated that “charity” means love in action. But is this notion true? Can this definition be supported by any known English language resource?
- First, I am not sure the context supports this definition. The passage says just as much about what charity “is not” (negative) as it does about what charity “is” (positive). Therefore, it seems that “charity” is more of the heart attitude with which someone does something than it is the action performed.
- Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language*, a commonly used dictionary among King James advocates offers 8 definitions for the English word “charity.” The first definition is the relevant one for our purposes:
 - 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.
 - 1 Corinthians 8:1. Colossians 3:14. 1 Timothy 1:5

- Meanwhile, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) the definitive record of the English Language states the following regarding the English word “charity:”
 - Christian love: a word representing *caritas* of the Vulgate, as a frequent rendering of *ἀγάπη* (agape) in N.T. Greek. With various applications: as
 - God's love to man. (By early writers often identified with the Holy Spirit.) *Obs.*
 - Man's love of God and his neighbour, commanded as the fulfilling of the Law, Matt. xxii. 37, 39. *Obs.*
 - The Christian love of one's fellow human beings; Christian benignity of disposition expressing itself in Christ-like conduct: one of the ‘three Christian graces’, fully described by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii.
- Notice that there is nothing said in either dictionary about “Love in action.” Furthermore, the OED states the following regarding the etymology of the word “charity:”
 - “The Greek word for ‘love’ in the N.T. (occasionally also in LXX) is *ἀγάπη* (agapē), from root of verb *ἀγαπᾶν* ‘to treat with affectionate regard’, ‘to love’; in the Vulgate, *ἀγάπη* is sometimes rendered by *dilectio* (noun of action < *diligere* to esteem highly, love), but most frequently by *caritas*, ‘dearness, love founded on esteem’ (never by *amor*). Wyclif and the Rhemish version regularly rendered the Vulgate *dilectio* by ‘love’, *caritas* by ‘charity’. But the 16th cent. English versions from Tyndale to 1611, while rendering *ἀγάπη* sometimes ‘love’, sometimes ‘charity’, did not follow the *dilectio* and *caritas* of the Vulgate, but used ‘love’ more often (about 86 times), confining ‘charity’ to 26 passages in the Pauline and certain of the Catholic [Jewish] Epistles (not in 1 John), and the Apocalypse, where the sense is specifically [1c](#) below. In the Revised Version 1881, ‘love’ has been substituted in all these instances, so that it now stands as the uniform rendering of *ἀγάπη*, to the elimination of the distinction of *dilectio* and *caritas* introduced by the Vulgate, and of ‘love’ and ‘charity’ of the 16th cent. Versions.”
- This is instructive, because it tells us the debate between “love” and “charity” is not a new one as it pertains to the translation of the English Bible. John Wycliffe who translated the Bible into English in the 14th Century (1300s) from the Latin vulgate used the Middle English form of charity (*charitē*) quite often. The Middle English Dictionary defines charity as:
 - “The supreme virtue of Love or Charity according to Christian doctrine, comprising affection, devotion, benevolence, kindness, mercy, gratitude as between God and man or man and man”
- The Greek word translated “charity” in I Corinthians 13 is the word *agapē*. This word occurs 116 times in 106 verses in the New Testament. It is translated as follows by the King James translators:

- Love—86x
 - Charity—28x
 - Dear—1x
 - Charitably—1x
 - Feast of charity—1x
- The OED is correct of the 28 times “charity” is used in the KJB they are all confined to the Pauline Epistles, I Peter, II Peter, III John, Jude, and Revelation. At the same time sprinkled within those same books are occurrences of the word *agapē* that are translated as “love.”
 - So why did the translators render *agapē* as “charity” in certain texts and “love” in others? Was it because they were trying to make some sort of super spiritual point? No, they were simply following the rules. According to Rule 1 given to the King James translators the Bishops Bible was to serve as their based text.
 - Rule 1: The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops’ Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.
 - When the King James translators left the word “charity” in the text they were simply following Rule 1 as set forth by Bishop Bancroft. I checked all 28 occurrences of “charity” against the Bishops Bible as well as other earlier translations of the *Textus Receptus* in the English and the Bishops had “charity” in all 28 occurrences. In contrast, Tyndale, Coverdale, the Great Bible, and the Geneva all had “love” in these 28 occurrences. As King James advocates we need to be careful what we say, because in this case the King James has more in common with Catholic Rheims Bible of 1582 which had “charity” in all 28 occurrences than Tyndale who had “love.”
 - The Greek word *agapē* from which we derive the English words “charity” and “love” is not found in the secular writers of ancient Greece and is unknown to writers outside of the New Testament. *Agapē* is different from other types of love mentioned in the New Testament in that it “denotes love which springs from admiration and veneration, and which chooses its object with decision of will, and devotes a self-denying and compassionate devotion to it. Love in its fullest conceivable form.”
 - *Agapaō*—to regard, esteem, to acquiesce with satisfaction, to cherish with reverence, to love, considered in reference to the tendency of the will. Also translated “beloved.”
 - Matthew 4:43, 44, 46
 - *Phileō*—to kiss, to love (Lat. *amare* to be in love with) used of the more direct demonstration of regard; refers to friendship when used between men; but love when between the sexes, to love considered in reference to a natural inclination, or an emotion i.e., the passion of love. Also translated to kiss.
 - John 11:3, Matthew 26:48

- I John 3:16—*agapē* equals love in its fullest conceivable form as exhibited in Christ.
- I John 4:9—expresses God’s relation to humanity.
- John 15:10—expresses how the members of the Godhead related to each other.
- I Corinthians 13:1—lastly it is the distinctive character of the Christian life in relation to the brethren.
 - “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.” (Webster’s 1828)
 - The Christian love of one’s fellow human beings; Christian benignity of disposition expressing itself in Christ-like conduct: one of the ‘three Christian graces’, fully described by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii.
- Charity is the heart attitude of Christ expressed to fellow members of the body of Christ.