

Sunday, December 10, 2017—I Corinthians 13:1-3 No Charity Equals Nothing

Introduction

- Over the past two weeks we have been looking at the words “charity” and “love” in the King James Bible.
- In doing so we uncovered a lot of interesting historical and textual information regarding the use of the English words “charity” and “love” in I Corinthians 13. My reason for considering those things that was not to correct the KJB but to understand why it reads as it does.
- With this background information behind us, I would like to move on through the passage.

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.**
- At the outset I would like to review a few general points about the context.
 - I Corinthians 12:31—the Corinthians had become covetous and competitive with respect to the spiritual gifts. Therefore, Paul is going to show unto them a more excellent way than the gifts.
 - I Corinthians 13 is often referred to as the “Love Chapter.” It is important to remember, that the main context here is a discussion of spiritual gifts, within this context Paul expounds upon this issue of “charity.”
- *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels*—notice that this statement is in the first person (“I”), Paul is using himself as an example. Notice he does the same thing in verses 2 & 3.
- Moreover, the verb “speak” is in the present tense. In other words, Paul is assuming that he can perform the action of speaking “with the tongues of men and of angels.”
- *and have not charity*—so even though the gift is legitimate or real it is not being done with “charity.” Please recall the following definitions of “charity” from last week.
 - *Webster’s 1828*—“ **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

- *OED*—"1) Christian love: a word representing *caritas* of the Vulgate, as a frequent rendering of *ἀγάπη* (agape) in N.T. Greek. With various applications: as
 - C) 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.
 - "But the 16th cent. English versions from Tyndale to 1611, while rendering *ἀγάπη* sometimes 'love', sometimes 'charity', . . . 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." (*OED* etymological information)
- I Corinthians 16:14
- I Corinthians 13:1—so if the tongues speaking going on was not being done with "charity" i.e., "**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" or "the Christian love of one's fellow human beings expressing itself in Christ-like conduct" than how was it being done?
 - It was being done for self-advancement, self-promotion, or self-edification for selfish reasons. It was not being done to "profit withal" or for the benefit of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:7).
- *I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*—notice how the lack of "charity" cancels out the witness of the gift of tongues. Instead of being a wonderful manifestation of God the Holy Spirit a lack "charity" transforms them into sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. Imagine if every time you speak all people heard was a sounding brass.

I Corinthians 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.**
- Once again, using himself as an example Paul mentions three gifts from chapter 12:
 - I Corinthians 12:10—"prophecy"
 - I Corinthians 12:8—"knowledge"
 - I Corinthians 12:9—"faith"—This is not a reference to saving faith in terms trusting in the finished work of Christ as the only total and complete payment for sin. "Faith" in this context is referring to miraculous supernatural ability.

- *and understand all mysteries*—is not mentioned as a gift in I Corinthians 12. The word translated “mysteries” is the Greek word *mystērion*. This is same word rendered “mystery” elsewhere in Paul’s epistles.
 - Romans 16:25
 - I Corinthians 2:7; 4:1; 15:51
 - Ephesians 1:9; 3:3-1, 9; 6:19
 - Colossians 1:27
- I Corinthians 13:2—so one who possessed the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and faith as well as understood all mysteries but did not have “charity” is nothing, according to Paul.
 - I Corinthians 8:1—a knowledge of the mystery and what God is doing today during the dispensation of grace is worth nothing if it is devoid of “**that disposition of heart** which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow man, and to do them good” or “the Christian love of one's fellow human beings expressing itself in Christ-like conduct.”
 - I Timothy 2:4—God’s will is for all men to be saved and come to knowledge of truth.
 - II Timothy 2:25—people who don’t understand the truth are to be dealt with in “meekness” not arrogance.
- I Corinthians 13:2—one would could do/understand all these wonderful things is nothing without “charity.”