

“Love is Number One!”

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

May 31, 2015

www.WORDFORLIFESAYS.com

(Please Note: All lesson verses and titles are based on International Sunday School Lesson/Uniform Series ©2010 by the Lesson Committee, but all content/commentary written within is original to wordforlifesays.com unless properly quoted/cited)

Introduction:

For the past few lessons we have been discussing one's gifts and the proper use of those gifts. At the same time, we have been dealing with the overall theme of everything being done and operated with love. In this week's lesson as we come to the conclusion, Paul once again magnifies the importance of love, stating, “The greatest of these is charity.”

Love is the number one principle with God and it should be our number one principle in dealing with each other. Our gifts are not what make us. It's all about how we show genuine love toward each other while still operating in said gifts.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 “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. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I gift my body to be burned, and have not, it profiteth me nothing.”

“And have not charity . . .” This phrase pops up three times in these three verses. Notice the gifts that are mentioned: “**tongues, prophecy, understand, knowledge, faith;**” these are just some of the gifts that we discussed in detail in

previous lesson. Yet, Paul says that if you do not have “**charity**” (love) at the core of it all, in his words, “**I am nothing.**”

This really helps to grasp our attention at the importance of it all. Our devotion to one another, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ, should take precedence over any gift that God has given us.

Love is our regulator. It governs how we behave and treat one another as opposed to using gifts for personal advantage and to lord it over others. That’s not what this Christian life is about. It’s about serving like Christ did; using what God gifted you and helping one another under the umbrella of love.

Since that’s exactly how God does everything, under love, we too should be imitators of our Father. Outside of it, we are “**nothing.**” It doesn’t matter how important you think your gift is, if love is not your motivator, than your gift is empty. Your box has nothing to offer the world except a bunch of extra noise; or, as Paul puts it, “**sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.**” Nothing but irritating noise!

I don’t know about you but I want to be more than noise; more than fluff. I want to have substance working at the core of my gift. I want lives to be changed and hearts to be lifted through what God has placed in me. This should be the attitude of every Christian. Not to get ahead, but to make a difference. Being a vessel so filled up with love and anointing, mixed with His special stuff He put on the inside of each of us, that we could help shift the atmosphere for some and help steer them on a course closer to God.

This can only happen if love is operating at the helm.

Jesus once encouraged His disciples by telling them, “For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith,” (Mark 11:23). Yet, Paul says you can “**remove mountains**” all you want but if love is not what’s lifting your faith to do than forget about it . . . ; it don’t mean a thing.

Paul was not contradicting what Jesus said because everything Jesus did from birth to death was done through love and His disciples are always expected to follow in His footsteps.

Paul is not denouncing doing things for others such as one who would “**bestow all . . . goods to feed the poor**” or the sacrificing of oneself (he gave the example of being “**burned**”); without love it will not last; it will not make the difference that He is looking for and it will not please God. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men,” (Colossians 3:23).

Later, Paul will write another letter to the Corinthian church that says, “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him,” (2 Corinthians 5:9). Everything must be “accepted of him.” But, without love (**charity**) all our works and gifts put together add up to a big, fat zero. There is no gain or “**profit**” from it.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoke, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Since the Corinthian church had such a problem with pride, advancement and the seeking of gifts for personal gain, Paul began to teach them exactly what love does and doesn’t look like.

One thing that love is, is longsuffering, or “**suffereth long**.” And why shouldn’t it be because that is exactly how God is toward us. Peter wrote, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” (2 Peter 3:9).

Look at how long God has held off judgment to get as many in the doors of heaven as possible. Look at how many times God has put up with our mess to give us chance after chance to get it right. He will not hold off forever, but in His

patience, He has put up with us and our evil ways that more would have an opportunity to enter eternal life.

Should not then we have the same love toward one another that would cause us to be just as patient and merciful as our God? Yes, we should! If you're not convinced read the parable of the Unforgiving Servant found in Matthew 18:23-35. His outcome was not so good.

Another thing that love is not is prideful and self-serving; it "**vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up... seeketh not her own.**" True, sincere and genuine love acts opposite of these. Love is all about stepping outside of oneself and serving those around us. Love compels us to look beyond the "me, myself and I" syndrome of this world to see how I can be an asset to someone else's life.

In their striving for success and popularity of the gifts, the Corinthian church forgot about this true love. Rather, they sought the promotion of self and Paul urged them back onto the right path where they behave as children of the Most High God.

Make no bones about it, God hates pride. Jesus also was known for rebuking the Pharisees on many occasions for their nature of exalting and promoting self. Once He said, in comparing true servants as opposed to those who lord the title, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted," (Matthew 23:12). James uses harsher language in telling us, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," (James 4:6). Therefore, those readers of this letter and us today need to be very careful which path we choose to walk down.

Neither does love "**behave itself unseemly.**" Love does not act inappropriately toward one another. It's like everything that Paul is teaching in regard to love is stuff that we learned as young children. Love is not vulgar and offensive; it "**rejoiceth not in iniquity.**" Love doesn't act sinful and it doesn't celebrate sin either. If one is a child of God, these behaviors should be far from one's new spiritual nature in Christ. Someone once said, "If you have been changed, act like it." This is where Paul is trying to lead the thinking and mindset of those in the

Corinthian church. The way one lives and carries themselves speaks louder than their words and tells the world whether they truly love and are of God; our lives on display helps them make up their mind or not in whether to follow Christ.

In a previous article I wrote:

“What people witness in your life resounds more than the words that are coming out of your mouth. Evidence of belief; proof of faith is the visual representation that most want. Many mistake others as not wanting what we have or not wanting the faith, yet they haven’t seen enough of it in action to provoke them to seek after what we say we have.

So, the old phrase still rings true today: “Seeing is believing.” To a world lost, who have not hope, they look for a ring of hope they can grab onto to prevent them from drowning in the deep abyss of the darkness of this world. They want a way out. Many don’t want to sink deeper into despair, deeper into the unknown where there is no light to guide the way. They want to see what you say you see. They want to feel what you say you feel. They want what you say you have but do they see it currently active in you to propel them from wanting it to seeking it?

. . . Your faith matters in this world. More importantly, your faith on display matters to those around you so much that one should not have to speak up or testify for you, all they should be able to do is look at your faith in action and mark you as a person of faith,” (Word For Life Says/Your Faith Speaks More Than Your Words).

Paul had to make sure they did not only love with words, but that their lives were reflecting the love they professed to have in Christ Jesus.

In describing the “not’s” of love, Paul also teaches that love **“is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.”** These, with all the rest of what Paul wrote acts like a gauge or a thermometer, if you will. The actions written therein tell us where we stand or don’t stand in our Christian behavior and love to one another; how we measure up.

Our job is to examine the principles herein and see where we need to adjust and modify our walk with Him. After all, our goal should be to live so that other would want what we have: Christ! They can't do that if they don't see Him on display through us and through our love toward one another.

Rather, Paul said, let me tell you what love DOES look like. Love looks like one who "**rejoiceth in the truth.**" This one celebrates everything that God stands for. Love manifested in one's life will live and work out what God has done on the inside of them through the Spirit of "**truth,**" thereby causing a reason to rejoice.

There is a quote that goes like this: "When the truth flowers in your heart, you will turn your back on ignorance and walk the path of brotherly love," – Author Unknown (Quote Source: Searchquotes.com). This is exactly what Paul is trying to teach his readers; when one celebrates and chooses "**truth**" it will keep them on the right path toward love.

With that being said, Paul goes on to teach that no matter what the situation or circumstance is love should rule completely. Love puts up with stuff and helps carry the burdens of others; "**it beareth all things.**" Love also "**believeth all things;**" love aspires to see the good in people. Love "**hopeth all things;**" meaning this type of love doesn't see the glass as half empty; rather, it sees it as half full; it sees the potential in the possible. Love "**endureth all things;**" this real love is expressed in its stick-to-itiveness nature. It perseveres when everyone else gives up. It holds on and goes through it with you. Everybody needs people in their lives that exhibit these true characteristics of love.

1 Corinthians 13:8-12 "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. 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. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Note: I know there are several interpretations that explain these verses, particularly dealing with the part where it says “**that which is perfect is come.**” Some view this as the completion of the New Testament and some as the return of Christ. It is the return of Christ from which I am coming. Everyone is subject to his/her opinion. What matters most is love.

“**Charity never faileth**” and you can never go wrong with love. Love is the only thing that will follow us into eternity. All these other gifts serve their purpose on this side of glory: “**prophecies . . . tongues . . . knowledge;**” so why fight and argue over who has the greatest value in their gift. Love is number one. Love is what matters most to God.

All these gifting’s are temporary in nature. When we get to heaven there will be no need to prophesy, or have tongues that convince, or knowledge that expounds. They are only “**part;**” a small revealing of what is to come. But, that which “**is come**” is “**perfect.**” It [He] has no deficiencies or flaws and has no need that man in his gifts to promote it [Him] any longer. The glory has entered in for all eternity. The works are completed at that time and everything that has to do with life down here will be over. Our heavenly residence will be all that matters and with whom we share it: Jesus!

Therefore, as the time comes when a “**child**” must grow up and “**put away childish things,**” so we must leave the elementary for the master’s and love will be the only degree that will matter at that time. No more murky images as one looking through a “**glass, darkly.**” Since there will be perfection it will be as though there is “**face to face**” clarity. WOW!

All obstructions to vision will be cleared and everything will be revealed. Full disclosure will let me “**know even as also I am known.**” He knows me and at that time there will be nothing that hinders me from knowing Him fully. Therefore, the need for gifts that only work as a “**part**” will be irrelevant. But, what will be relevant is love.

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

Love is number one; it is the “**greatest.**” When all shall be revealed “**faith and hope**” will no longer be needed. Love will endure through all eternity.

Conclusion:

Choose love today!

WordForLife Says