

I Corinthians Lesson # 29
Spiritual Gifts Administered in Love
Pentwater Bible Church
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May 16, 2010

Today's lesson centers on the way God planned to execute the Spiritual Gifts He gave the Church, in love. God has many attributes and each has equal strength, which He administers in perfect balance with one another. That is, He is not more loving than He is just. Like all things from God that we experience here on earth there is perfect order and sequence.

God transcends His creation in that he is outside of it. He does not live in time and space as we do. Our Bible reveals Him to us. It does not seek to prove that God exists. The revelation of God in our Bibles is progressive. This means that in the very beginning of the Bible God is announced as creating time, space and matter. From this first verse in Genesis through the entire Old Testament we learn increasingly more of His nature control, plans for the entire universe and what He expects from us. This we refer to as God's sovereignty and our responsibility.

By His very nature God is pure spirit (Gen 1:2-3; John 4:24). God is infinite spirit. He is not limited in any sense. He is infinite spirit, which places Him completely out of the reach of our experience. We are limited as to time and space. He is not. As a result we say that he is infinite which we call eternal. He is omnipresent which we call always being everywhere. He is omniscient meaning He knows everything and omnipotent meaning He has unlimited power. At the same time God's infinity implies His immanence. By this we acknowledge that even though he lives outside of time and space He still has all all-pervading presence and power within the creation. He acts from the center of each atom to cause life and all that it entails to operate as He has planned.

The fall, which He allowed to come upon the earth with its fracturing results to the creation, still has Him in complete control of all things. Some of His attributes revealed through Scripture are:

1. Wisdom
2. Sovereignty
3. Infinitude
4. Holiness
5. Trinity
6. Omniscience
7. Faithfulness
8. Love
9. Omnipotence
10. Self-existence
11. Self-sufficiency
12. Justice
13. Mercy
14. Immutability
15. Eternal

16. Goodness
17. Omnipresence
18. Jealous
19. Longsuffering
20. Foreknowledge
21. Wise
22. Wrathful
23. Righteous

For our purposes here in I Corinthians chapter thirteen we must realize that all of His attributes are working together in perfect unison. One attribute does not out weigh another. So while this chapter focuses on one attribute, Love, it does not mean that love overrides all the others. For a human example we can look the other way when a brother or sister in Christ does not treat us well or ignores us. However, sin must be called out for what it is. This does not mean that we do not love. When we correct our children we are administering love so they will know the truth and behave in a proper God-fearing manner. In the same way when God corrects or administers His justice it does not mean that He does not love us. He does and wants what is best for us at all times. He wants us to conform to Him.

I Corinthians 12: 31b and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Regardless of what we are trying to accomplish within The Body of Believers without love it will fall flat. The exercise of our Spiritual Gifts in the Church must be done with love for each other. We just studied the reverse of this in the last chapter. Some were exalting their gifts over others. Some were appealing to have gifts that God had given to others. Spiritual Gifts are very important to the Body for its effective operation. Without love though they lose their value and can't be administered as God has intended.

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.

This verse sets the stage for abuse the Corinthians were exercising with speaking in tongues. In verse 12:28 tongues is listed last showing its relative importance to building up the Body of Christ. The Corinthians considered tongues to be the language of angels. Remember the pagans used this practice too. They were called ecstatic utterances. When the pagans did this they called it speaking with the voice of the gods. Paul immediately strikes at this practice to refute the way they were going about it. They were doing it without any love for their fellow believers. When Christianity is mixed with unbelievers practices or even ecumenical efforts to combine truth with false beliefs we call this syncretism. In I Corinthians 12:2 Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were led astray to the dumb idols. In the KJV here the translators used the word charity for love because they reasoned when one loves properly one is led to give (John 3:16).

What does Paul find superior to speaking in tongues? Love

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.

The gift of prophecy enabled first century Christians to foretell the future as to what God's plans were. It is used today to primarily bring a clear presentation of God's Word under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Some people are given this gift along with the ability know everything about God's Word and as such can easily communicate it to others. Without love though this gift falls flat and is, as Paul states so clearly *nothing*. Some who have faith in the extra measure described in these three chapters have to exercise it in love or their faith is worth nothing. Nobody will care if there is no love shown along with the faith.

Are any Spiritual Gifts better than love? The answer is no!

I Corinthians 13: 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Some think that giving to the poor in an act of charity is sufficient to gain God's favor. They reason that because they have done a good deed they deserve God's grace and should therefore be admitted to heaven. This is not true and it is also not true for the believer who gives to the poor for reasons other than in the spirit of love for the furtherance of God's Kingdom. True love produces a willingness to sacrifice and to suffer. If pride is added to this as the motivating factor instead of love it is of no use to the Church.

How does Paul compare love to self-sacrifice? He says it is inferior to love and does nothing to profit us.

I Corinthians 13: 4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Jesus said to His followers that if they will Love God they would fulfill the Law. Instead of striving to keep the commandments just love God with all of our hearts, then our behavior will follow. Much in the same way Paul opens this section of Scripture with the same concept and is going to show us what it looks like. Love is patient and is not easily angered. Just as God is long suffering we should not be quick to anger. Such love bears annoyances or inconveniences without resorting to anger. Kindness takes the initiative to respond to the needs of others with generosity. Love does not become envious of others for what they have especially in how God has gifted them spiritually. This was a major problem with the Corinthians they wanted the gifts that others had. Boasting or a prideful attitude is wholly outside of a loving attitude. One should never boast about our Spiritual Gifts. We did nothing to obtain them.

I Corinthians 13: 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rudeness and or discourteous crude speaking are not in keeping with the love God wants us to convey to others. Love does not demand that we always get our own way. Much in the same as love is patient our exercise of Spiritual Gifts must not allow easily being angered. It does not say *without anger*. It says *easily* angered. Righteous anger or indignation is within Christian communication. A loving attitude does not immediately assume that our brothers and sisters in Christ are intentionally plotting wrong or intentionally disappointing us. Love will not easily remember past wrongs done to us.

I Corinthians 13: 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

No believer should ever take joy in another's fall. Love does not take pleasure in that kind of injustice. Even if it was deserved, we should not be joyful over another's problems. We should remain untainted by evil. Desire the truth and the author of truth Jesus. Protect the truth and proclaim the truth with each opportunity.

I Corinthians 13: 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Paul now gives us four positive attributes of love. We must bear up to the embarrassment or gossip we hear about others and not pass it on. It does not mean that we are willing protect someone guilty of harmful sins. Believing all things does not mean we are gullible. It means we should think well of others unless convinced otherwise. Being hopeful of all things means that we want situations to turn out for the best even though it does not seem like they will. We should stay positive about issues in our lives that affect the body of believers. Perseverance is a loving attitude in the face of adversity. It does not mean we never give up. It means we put up with a lot before we give up.

I Corinthians 13: 8-10 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.

Even though everything on this earth will fail, corrode, rot or be destroyed including our Spiritual Gifts love will last forever. This is because God is Love (I John 4:8, 16). No matter how much some of us know compared to God we only know a little. Our knowledge will cease when we leave these bodies. When God's Messianic Kingdom is set up here on the earth all the Spiritual Gifts will disappear. This is because they are given for the building of the Church, which will be eliminated with the establishment of god's Kingdom here on earth.

This is the answer to question 4: Will love last longer than any Spiritual Gift? Yes it will outlast them all.

I Corinthians 13: 11 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.

Paul uses the illustration of becoming a man and leaving childish endeavors behind to compare the elimination of Spiritual Gifts once the Kingdom is set up. Only love will outlast the Gifts. This is also an implied reference to the elimination of some Spiritual Gifts after the apostolic age was complete and the Church was established.

This is the answer to question 5: What childish things did Paul put away in adulthood? The sign Spiritual Gifts and actually all of them once we are in heaven.

I Corinthians 13: 12 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.

Our Spiritual Gifts and Christian experience here are a fuzzy glimpse of heaven. When we see God face to face we will have a much richer experience that is presently unseen and impossible to describe.

This is the answer to question 5: Who will Paul see face to face? God Himself and Christ.

I Corinthians 13: 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

For now faith and hope as well as love are Christian experiential spiritual realities. We have faith and hope in God's Word and we love God and others. When we leave these bodies our faith and hope will have been used to get us to heaven. It is only our love that will endure into heaven and later the Messianic Kingdom.

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