

Love or Charity

prayer

Good morning, be blessed in Jesus name!

Today we are going to discuss Charity. But before we get too far into the topic, let's set up some ground work.

How many individuals here have used or currently use a version of the bible other than that King James Version? There are some versions of the bible that are translations and there are some that are paraphrases. What this means is that some versions of the bible use words thought to be the best translations of the words used in the original text of the bible. Whereas, a paraphrase tries to understand what is being said and then writes a modern english equivalent of the text. When we do word studies, translations are preferred as we can dig down and uncover the original meanings for ourselves. The KJV is a good translation but there are even more accurate versions such as Young's Literal Translation.

This is relevant because the word Charity is used in the KJV whereas; in more modern translations we find that the word: "Love" has been substituted for charity.

This is a focus of the teaching message today is that we need to understand that the bible details four forms of love. Without getting too technical, what we need to understand of these four types of love is that there is EROS, which is erotic love between a man and a woman, there is PHILEO love which exists between biological and adopted siblings. Next there is STORGE which is the word used for fondness of someone or something brought about through familiarity with them or it and finally there is AGAPE love which is unconditional love, this love is the love between God and Man, between Man and God and between Christian brothers and sisters.

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 8:1 KJV:

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but CHARITY edifieth.

Ok pause break... at this point some may be asking why do we need to understand this? To which I would reply stay with me and trust me because I really am going somewhere that each of us as Christians need to understand.

In our modern society, love is expressed in many ways, yet when we talk of love it is recognized as an emotion... Did you get that... an emotion.

Some biblical scholars would claim that the word "Charity" is either wrong or outdated. In fact, many modern translations utilize the word "love" instead. When we study the words charity and love and what they mean in english vs. The Greek word AGAPE we begin to see why there is a problem.

Thayer's Greek Definitions defines agape as "Brotherly love, affection, good will, love, benevolence" Now when we consult the Merriam Webster online Etymological Dictionary the english word "Charity" comes from the Latin word "Caritas" which means "Christian love" as opposed to sexual love".

Historically we have found that Latin theologians such as Augustine have used the word :caritas as a term of art to refer specifically to Christian Love. Whenever we encounter “charity’ in the KJV it is in reference to this Christian Love as defined by latin scholars.

There are many verses that use the word Charity.

For the list I am providing today check this sermon text on the website. This list is not comprehensive but sufficient for the purposes today:

- 1 Corinthians 8:1
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-4, 8, 13
- I Corinthians 14:1
- 1 Corinthians 16:14
- Colossians 3:14
- 1 Thessalonians 3:6
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3
- 1 Timothy 1:5
- 1 Timothy 4:12
- 2 Timothy 2:22
- 2 Timothy 3:10
- Titus 2:2
- 1 Peter 4:8
- 1 Peter 5:14
- 2 Peter 1:7
- 3 John 1:6
- Jude 1:12
- Revelation 2:19

Why do I relate these 24 examples to you this morning?

Is is because through proper study of the etymology (origin of words) and proper exegesis (scripture in context) we find that Charity is in fact an accurate translation of the word AGAPE.

Now as a modern society it can be accurately stated that when most think of Charity they think of giving donations. Even if we accept that fact, it does not mean that the word Charity in the KJV is outdated or inaccurate. What it means is that it is an expanded aspect of the original meaning of the word. It indicates that as a culture we have simply strayed from the bible actually means when we read charity.

Why is this relevant today? What am I getting at?

Just as love is more than an emotion, so two charity is more that making a donation to a worthy cause.

Let’s look at how simply reading the bible without understanding can lead to difficulty. In fact, did you know that the reason why in denominations such as the Catholic church do not encourage their people to read the bible independently is that they do not want their people to become confused when not having the skills to truly discern what is meant in scripture. I think this is good and bad. It helps prevent flawed interpretations and errors in doctrine. Yet, as a Christian believer, I would rather study and understand the scriptures for myself rather than rely on someone else’s interpretation or revelations. I believe this is what the bible means when it tells us in 2 Timothy 2:15 to study to show ourselves approved.

Consider with me this morning 1 Corinthians 13:13 KJV

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.”

Now the same exact verse in the NIV reads:

“And now these three remain: Faith, Hope and Love. But the greatest of these is love”

So when we consider the differences between Love and Charity in our modern culture. Love has become an emotion or even a cerebral practice if you will. And Charity has become donations.

The problem is that biblical charity is far more than what we think it is and love encompasses more than emotion. Neither one in our modern model truly fits the full definition and thus we really must contemplate what each definition provides and what each is missing from the other.

What are we missing when we read charity?

We need to grasp that Charity encompasses the emotion of love towards all others in unconditional and self-sacrificial ways...

Now with this in mind let us look once more at James 2:17 KJV

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Now let us look at the NIV

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead

My point is that both translations of the word of God clearly show that when we are speaking of faith being exemplified as Love is not just emotional but requires an action component. It requires charity.

So in order to be clear we really need to understand what it means when we talk of love or charity.

Let's define it clearly then from a biblical standpoint. **Charity/Love means: to participate in tangible acts of loving-kindness towards ALL others in an unconditional and self-sacrificial way. It is to show love intentionally and tangibly in a compassionate way.**

So we may even come to consider that this form of biblical Love/Charity is a quality of living that seeks the welfare of others before its own desires.

Let's look now at one of my favourite scriptures 1 Corinthians 13:1-6 NIV but I want us to understand what it is saying in light of our Biblically based understanding of what Agape Love is telling us...

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Let us now understand as I paraphrase one aspect of what is being said here:

I can be eloquent and inspired in what I say, but if I do not participate in tangible acts of loving kindness towards others in a self-sacrificial, and unconditional way, I am just a mouth piece making noise. If I can foretell what is going to happen and understand all the mysteries of this life even to the point of being all knowing so that I can remove all obstructions and difficulties in my life, but I do not show love by participating in tangible acts of loving kindness towards all others in an unconditional and self-sacrificial way, then I am nothing. If I am in fact charitable as defined as in modern society such that I donate, support and give money to the poor, but don't do it with the emotional aspect of caring and loving or if I allow myself to be physically abused so that I can gain hero or martyr status but I am not practicing a quality of living that seeks the welfare of others before my own desires... I gain nothing.

When we practice love/charity in a biblical sense it must be:

- patient
- kind
- humble
- protective
- un self-centred & focused on others
- forgiving
- truthful
- trusting
- hopeful
- persevering

But why?

For this we need to look at verses 8-13

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Remember that we serve the God of Agape love as we observe this scripture in the single context of our topic today, which means this scripture has more to offer us, but we are studying from the perspective of what the words love/charity actually biblically mean.

Now let us paraphrase the passages based on our biblical definitions of love/charity:

When we participate in tangible acts of loving-kindness towards ALL others in an unconditional and self-sacrificial way, there is never failure. The knowledge of the future that we have now is not complete but Jesus will reveal it when he comes back. Right now we are as children compared to the knowledge of God, we think like children, we reason as children. But the revelation of God matures. Right now our knowledge is incomplete and we see only a reflection of the truth, yet God will reveal his truth to us and we will fully know and understand, even as God fully knows and understands us.

We have faith, we have hope and we have love, where the greatest of these is love as defined by the reflection of our loving-kindness towards ALL others in an unconditional and self-sacrificial way.

The message today is simple:

When we read love or charity they are incomplete without each other. We know this because we have investigated the original meanings and the intent of the original author when they wrote love in the context of AGAPE or Godly love. When we understand what they meant to say, regardless of any loss in the translation across language or modern drift of the original meanings of words, we begin to understand the vital factors when we read love or charity.

The first is that they are incomplete without understanding what parts of each definition are required and why translators had a difficult time choosing between the words charity and love.

The second is that when we read about agape love it is clear that it is not just a cognitive exercise or an emotional response. It is clear that action is required. And conversely when we understand that Charity is more than giving a donation or taking action, we realize that it is nothing without participating emotionally and cognitively with love. We need to understand that unconditional love is not selective of who is worthy. We need to love in an unconditional and self-sacrificial way. We have truly understood what the bible means when we read love or charity in God's word.

At Crossroads we:

- Worship God
- Love ALL People
- Embrace Community

That love all people is agape, it is not just cognitive or emotional, but embraces all that we have spoken about today.

Prayer