

Spiritual Gifts Ultimate Gift part 3

By Rev. P. Michael Williamson January 31st 2010

Introduction: Three weeks focused on Spiritual Gifts ch 12 & 13

Today looking at 1 Corinth 13 which stresses the ultimate gift LOVE. The only true evidence of God's indwelling Spirit is love.

Explanation of an exercise we did last time.

The HS job "To convict the world of sin and righteousness" John 16:8. Listening to God about conviction of sin we all heard easily. Some one asked me "Why did we not hear so easily when we asked the Lord to convict us of righteousness?" My explanation would be we are not used to God speaking to us in that way --- we have "our evangelical/charismatic baggage" which says "God doesn't speak in that way."

We are not so aware of God's loving action towards us. God's intention is always LOVE towards us. Why? because the scriptures tell us the truth when John says "God is Love" 1 John 4:16.

God can turn any and every situation into a means of expressing love towards you – even in the midst of grief, sorrow or illness God can express love toward you in some way.

Illustration: Our understanding of God's love toward us is a capsule of water. But God's love towards us is as vast or immeasurable as the water in the ocean. Our lack of understanding is why we don't hear God speaking to us with encouraging words. It is not because God is not speaking it is because we don't perceive or hear his loving voice. If hearing God's voice is like tuning into a radio station, we are trying to tune into a station we haven't listened to before. It takes practice; it takes more than one try. Lord would you convict me of something I have done right this week? Let me remind you.

Job 33:14 For God does speak—now one way, now another— though man may not perceive it. Just because we don't perceive it does not mean that God is not speaking to us in a loving way. God does speak – now one way, now another....

NB: When speaking of love it is always agape love which reflects the vastness & graciousness of God's love. That underserved love of God toward us.

1. The Necessity of Love (v.1-3)

Paul insists on love's necessity, it is not optional in the Christian faith. In ch12 Paul stated that various gifts were given to different people: all the gifts

were not given to all the people. "But the 'most excellent way'...is for all without exception." SU Notes Nov 28th

The Corinthians struggled with competitiveness and concerns for status in the community (sounds familiar).

They brought this distorted view into faith, into the church and into their use of spiritual gifts. But when they and we understand how much we are loved then love becomes the motivation for all we do including the use of spiritual gifts.

Msg v.3b says: "I'm bankrupt without love." We are out of business; we will not be able to carry on with life at all. Without love we cannot function, we can't carry on, the game is over. Paul deliberately uses the 1st person pronoun "If I...": when "I" is at the centre even spiritual gifts can be twisted. So truly I am nothing without love. "I'm bankrupt without love."

Spiritual gifts are not about personal validation and status; they are given by a loving God who wishes to convey that love to his children. Gifts are given for the building up, encouragement and comfort of people. 1 Corinth 14:3

However we display our spirituality, without love it is worthless and inconsistent with our ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is not spiritual gifts but love.

2. The Nature of Love (v.4-7)

Love is not (8) Can you identify all eight?

Love does not: envy, boast, proud, rude, self seeking, easily angered, keeps no record of wrong, does not delight in evil

Love is (4) Patient, kind, rejoices in the truth, love never fails (v.8a)

Love always (4) protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres

That is an incredible list. --- Study it! --- Live it! --- Put it into practice!

The verses focus particularly on how we respond to other people. If I was to sum up these verses I would say: "Love is putting others first."

That means seeing life from the other person's point of view.

Understanding v's condemning.

Trusting v's rejecting

"Love is unselfishness in action" commentator

The action of love is in concrete situations as expressed in the local church or community.

Love is a basic aspect of discipleship, Jesus had to remind and even rebuke his disciples when they were arguing about who was the greatest. He told them that love was indispensable, vital if you are to be one of my disciples. The same holds true for us.

3. The Permanence of Love (v.8-13)

“A Christian community can makeshift somehow if the gifts of chapter 12 are lacking. It will die if love is absent.” (F.F.Bruce)

Given our current position here on earth we view spiritual gifts as essential, and they are, if we are to follow the guidance and direction of God. But they only remain until we reach heaven, they are not permanent or eternal. Paul likens our current life to being infants in a nursery. The world is the nursery where we God's children run around and are excited about what God says to us and that is good for now.

1 John 3:1 (NIV) How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

In contrast, when we arrive in heaven we will be adults knowing the full extent and the immensity of God's love for us. Christian love here and now is only an appetizer of heaven where we will be shown into the banqueting table of God's awe-inspiring love for us. These current spiritual gifts will pale in comparison to the full disclosure of God's love and the complete revelation of the God of heaven.

Love is the one thing that will carry over from this life to eternal life. Prophecy, tongues, and other spiritual gifts will no longer be necessary in heaven because we will be in such close and loving communion with God. We will dwell in the light of his loving presence.

Paul wanted love to be the primary motive of all the Corinthian's actions. God wants love to be the major motive of all our actions as well.

Msg v.13 But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

1. The necessity of love
2. The nature of Love
3. The permanence of Love

All these come together and we have to put them into practice --- we need to ask God to show us how to Love extravagantly --- in the real world in concrete situations

YES BUT HOW?

Let love be your primary motive – love others --- because you have been loved by God – serve

others in practical ways --- give generously where you see a need.

Hold conversations with God and ask “Lord what do you want me to do in this situation?” --- “What do you want to do through me here and now?”

And expect God to give you answer --- clues – nudges – and then follow those promptings --- the more you follow them the better you will be at hearing God's voice. The more God will work through you.

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“We are bankrupt without love.” (Msg)

2. The Nature of Love (v.4-7)

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Love is (4)

Love always (4)

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Infants on earth

Adults in heaven



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