

Hello brothers and sisters in Christ, and friends,

We're back to our study of 1st Corinthians 13. Okay, picking up in verse two. "**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, but have not love, I am nothing.**" (1st Corinthians 13:2)

The word prophecy there is talking about having God's insight to predict something in the future - a gift that is not genuinely around anymore, because the Scriptures have been written. But, bringing this into perspective, God through Paul is reminding us that even if we can foretell the future accurately for the edification of the body of Christ, and yet if we lack the essential and simple agape love for those we are talking to, we are nothing! It doesn't matter if we look good on stage or behind a pulpit or on the streets or in one-2-one conversations - because if our lifestyle is about pleasing 'me' - that love is hypocritical and the message is hollow, even it sounds 'eloquent'. And, please notice that Paul didn't stop there. He also noted that even if he could understand all mysteries - all possibly Biblical doctrines - all of theology (which is very hard for a finite brain to understand an infinite God, Creator, Judge and Lord) - but, even if he could understand everything there is to know and have "**all knowledge**" - it's completely and totally hollow (to God and others) if there is not a genuine love for the people we are talking with.

Sadly, I think this applies to many today, and this may step on your toes too - don't worry, it steps on mine as well :) ~ Brethren, it doesn't matter how much doctrine we can quote or how many Bible scholars' works we have memorized - if we do not care about the people we are talking to - not just on Sundays or whenever we meet to study the Bible, but everyday. And what about our families? Again, it doesn't matter if we look great on stage and can answer every question thrown at us - if we don't care about the souls and the spiritual well-being of the people we are talking to and with, especially those at home. I have seen too many 'big leaders' who are so proud that they think they're something and they only care about their little clique, and it just proves that the only thing they care about is their pride. When I see it, I try to pray that God would humble them, and He often does the same for me - which hurts, but for which I'm extremely grateful, because on Judgment Day, I only want to hear one kind of welcome: "**Well done...**" (Matthew 25:21,23). I think we, as a body of Christ forget (by accident or busy-ness), or intentionally ignore the fact that there will probably be many who enter Heaven's gates, to then see all of their life's busy-work burn up in smoke, yet their soul was "**saved so as by fire**" (1st Corinthians 3:15). And, even worse - what about those who self-deceived themselves all of their lives that they were a believer and did *many* (note that word) good deeds and helpful things for the body of Christ and people in general, yet, they won't even be welcome in Heaven and will shockingly hear "**Depart from Me, I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness.**" (Matthew 7:21-23) Those are, I believe some of the most chilling words in Scripture - absolutely chilling. And I think, we as a culture too often overlook the main little four-letter word in it: "**many**". We forget that that word could include us. The solution? Re-engage in God's Word and prayer, asking Him to

teach us to love what He loves, hate what He hates, and how to love people as He loves us.

You may remember that in our study in 1st Timothy 3 (that grew out of our study in Matthew 13), we were at the point of talking about the novice who fell into the same condemnation as the Devil. Notice that - the same condemnation... that's scary. Could it happen to you or me? Don't know, but I know this, we'd better stay vigilant and watchful so that it doesn't describe us. And, by the way, here's the text I'm referring to: **"A bishop then must be blameless,... not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil."** (1st Timothy 3:1,6) - Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride (as Satan was/is too), he falls into the same condemnation as the Devil. Does anyone catch the gravity that lays on us? That is another heavy passage, one which we MUST learn from, so that we are shocked when we see Christ.

Brother, sister, friend - please allow me to ask you something that might just change your whole life's direction as others have done for me. Do you have someone who keeps you accountable on the subject of pride, according to the Bible? I'm blessed to have a few that He uses in most wonderful way in my life - and I pray [when I'm humble :) ] I pray that God will always keep people in my life who can graciously yet to-the-point correct me or gently show me a huge blind spot, so that I don't become worthless to Christ, my Master and Savior. And one of my regular prayers is asking God to keep me humble, because it's my main desire to please Christ, not avoid pain. So, though I'm certainly not perfect on this subject, but growing - my question to you, is do you have one? Do you have an accountability partner who helps you stay humble and helps you find the right questions to stay close to God? That person could be your wife or husband. That person could be a family member - brother or sister. That person could be a brother or sister in Christ, a co-worker, a church leader. If you cannot identify one, I'm requesting that you, for your eternal soul's sake and well-being, ask your Creator to provide you with one. But, the next part here is the hardest for you and me - daily learn to not push them away when they are asking the hard questions. That preaches to me, as I'm sure it encourages you too. Don't push them away as the children of Israel did in the wilderness, when they hardened their hearts in rebellion against the very God and Creator who had brought them out of slavery in Egypt. They complained about the amazing provisions that God had given them, and God struck many dead because of their constant grumbling against their Creator (1st Corinthians 10:10). That's a lesson we can learn from in this overly-abundant, all-too-comfortable, and lazy culture.

We are coming up to ThanksGiving, and I can personally tell you that this life is hard - for all of us. Yet, we need to (as God is using people to teach me) - we need to continue to grow in gratitude for all of the wonderful provisions we receive from our Creator. I hope you will join me in working and intentionally growing in this - it's quite a battle, but one worth fighting. :)

Okay, I've stepped on my toes a bunch, but, I hope we continue to grow in humility, so that we will receive a warm welcome into Heaven, as well as continue to be useful to Christ each and every day of our lives.

Okay, back to 1st Corinthians 13:2 - it doesn't matter how much knowledge we have or how much it looks like we serve people, if we don't care about them. Paul fills in more detail on this in the next verse, as well. Let's look at that... next time :)

Take care, your growing brother and friend, SH