

Snapshots of a Disciple

A look at love in action - 1st Corinthians 13 (vs3)

Hello brothers, sisters, and friends,

Okay, we've had some great conversations lately. Now, let's pick up in verse 3 of 1st Corinthians 13. Now, as we continue to look at this, let's just keep in mind that our focus is studying the text about love - but it's not love's definition - it's love in action. Meaning - 1st Corinthians 13 gives us a working model to help us identify ourselves, if we are walking in God's agape love or not. So, with that thought, let's look at verse 3 - and for those who need/want a digital Bible for this time's study - here's BlueLetterBible:

(www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=1Cr&c=13&v=3&t=NKJV). Okay, here we go.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” (1st Corinthians 13:3)

Wow, there is a lot in this verse, yes? Quick how many philanthropists can you list off the top of your head? Bill Gates come to many's minds, as does Jimmy Buffet and Steve Jobs - and many others right, as the world looks at it - many other multi-billionaires are considered philanthropists (*but some of that might just be because they have good press people and advertisers :P*). Okay, so how much money have they given? Millions - possibly tens of millions - maybe even hundreds of millions, and a few have probably given billions, right? Many are giving much money to send food to Africa and the areas of Indonesia where they were just hit by another strange tsunami, and helping education (which isn't helping our 'public' schools any...) - etc. At first that looks great, right? But, have you studied the beliefs of some of these people - some of them really do believe the evolution lie and others believe in very strange and perverted gods. Of course, those who believe in evolution, believe that it's survival of the fittest. So, is their gift genuine? Well, that's debatable because they are sending GMO foods (genetically altered foods that destroy on the inside). That doesn't sound good.

But, let's take the what if that they are sending top quality food (which they're not) and helping people get top quality and honest education (which they're not) - but, let's just take the what if. What if they were doing all the right things - with no hidden agendas - are they doing anything to help the people for eternity?

You see that's what I see that comes out very clearly here in verse 3. It does not matter if they sacrifice their whole lives helping people and meeting their physical and emotional needs, if they are not sharing the truth of God's Word - it's nothing. Some may say - uh, Steven, haven't you gotten off topic? Good question. Let's look at a couple of verses, and I think you'll see what's got my attention recently.

So, turn with me, if you will to Ephesians 4, verse ... well there's a lot there, but specifically, let's look at verse 14. **“...that we should no longer be children, tossed**

to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ...” (Eph. 4:14-15) Did you catch that one phrase: **“speaking the truth in love”** ~ and I admit there’s much richness here in Ephesians 4, but we don’t have time to cover it this time - just note that one phrase if you will. And, that word **“love”** is the same word agape - unconditional love, as we saw and talked about in verse 1 - same word. Notice that God here combines speaking the truth and agape love. Okay, now let’s flip over to Romans 12, verse 9. **“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”** (Romans 12:9) Yes, again the word **“love”** is the word agape, and the word hypocritical - is the word for real - not faked, genuine - not an act. This is God through the apostle Paul warning us about fake love. That is what 1st Corinthians 13 has been talking about - how we can do all these good things, and yet if there’s not love in our hearts - genuine love, not faked love, in our hearts, then it’s all for nothing - we’re wasting our time.

Okay, now that was talking about those who don’t know Christ. What about us - those of us who know and are growing in following Christ? Is it possible that we too could do righteous deeds that will be empty? Of course.

So, how do we show genuine love? We just saw that answer in Ephesians 4 - what was it? **“speaking the truth in love...”** Make sense now? Now, what is the most important truth or package of truth that we can possibly share with others? Agape love? Haha, yes, but in an eternal sense, in light eternity - what is the most important truth that we can possibly share with people? The Gospel, right? The “good news”. What is the good news? Well, let’s look at it in 3 verses. .. haha, so that’s really hard to do to boil the most important message of Scripture down to 3 passages, but, let’s look at passages to find the most important truth to share with people.

You ready? Okay, let’s start

First, let’s start in Matthew 28. Matthew 28, verse 18. **“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”** (Matthew 28:18-20) ~ The very important last words of Jesus have 3 points to them -

- 1> make disciples of Jesus, reasoning with everyone you meet and talk with - working to convince them to follow Christ and give Him their lives
- 2> baptizing them - publicly identifying with Jesus back then could get you killed, and in some countries it still does today - it’s an important act of obedience after the genuine heart change that comes from becoming a new creation in Christ.
- 3> teaching them to observe all that He’s commanded us ~ what’s that mean? As we are able, take people back to Jesus’ words and study Jesus’ words with them,

teaching them to follow Christ, and what that looks like in real life. People say that they think I'm doing well at this - I'd like to turn that thought around to a question for you - how well are you doing this? :) Let's all grow in these important truths, okay?

Okay, second passage - let's turn to Mark 8, verse 34. **“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’”** (Mark 8:34-38) - The good news is that those who repent and turn from their sins, giving their lives to Jesus - counting the cost, will not only gain eternal life and never be put to shame, but they then can and should grow closer to Him here and earn rewards and a warm welcome when they see Him when they're work here is done.

And that leads to the third passage - let's look at **“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”** (Acts 3:19) A close fourth would be 2nd Corinthians 5 **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”** (2nd Corinthians 5:17) - another wonderful rich passage. ~ So those 3 passages are among many that capture the good news.

And, as we saw above, if we take care of the poor, yet do not show genuine love to people, including sharing God's truth with them - everything is in vain. And, on judgment day all of those good deeds will go up in smoke. 1st Corinthians 3, puts it this way: **“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”** (1st Corinthians 3:11-16) - a most sobering passage for some, but exciting for those who are faithful in growing in obedience to our Master and Savior Jesus Christ.

Okay, back to 1st Corinthians 13:3 to wrap up - **“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”**

It doesn't matter if we give all of our possessions away, or if we feed every hungry person, or if we even are martyred for Christ (burn for Him) ~ if we do not genuinely

care about the people we are talking with, including in an eternal sense, it profits them and us nothing. Genuine love isn't just taking care of physical needs, but helping people find peace with God. Matthew 5 reminds us of that: **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."** (Matthew 5:9) - Those who help people get right with God - make peace with Him, are genuine peacemakers and sons of God. **"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."** (1st John 3:1)

When people give money and stuff to needy people yet do not teach them about the real God and Creator, they have done nothing in light of eternity. However, when people give money, food, and stuff to needy people and share the gospel by word or a tract or a Bible, they have reached that person temporarily and in light of eternity. That is what is meant by us being salt and light in this dark uncaring world. And that is the model that the early churches had and that we have lost. I believe we need to regain it! Who's with me? :)

Okay, by way of review, I believe we need these 3 truths to get into our hearts and lives, for I believe these are the core message of the Bible and the gospel. I believe that these are 3 most important truths we must always teach and remind ourselves and our friends and brethren:

- 1> Fear of the Lord (Job 28:28, Proverbs 1:7, Acts 9:31) - *the healthy strong-respect of God that drives us away from anything that is evil*
- 2> Genuine repentance (2nd Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 7:13-, 21-23, Acts 3:19)
- 3> Obedient Faith (Luke 6:46, John 14:15-24, 1st John 1:5-9)

And with that, I look forward to picking up on verse 4, here in our walk through 1st Corinthians 13, sometime soon. I'm learning a lot through this that is changing me on the inside - causing me to re-look at things, and how I might be able to reach people more effectively with the Word of God, calling them to become bondslaves of Jesus. ~ I hope it's a blessing to you too.

Till next time, let's keep growing deeper in His Word, and in passionate bold obedience to Him, and in sharing His truth with those around us! ~ your growing brother/friend, SH