

Snapshot of a Disciple

A look at love in action - 1st Corinthians 13 (verse 6a)

Hello brothers, sisters, and friends,

As most of you know, we're working through 1st Corinthians 13, and I'm quoting from the NKJV (new king james version). So, if you have a Bible handy, you can use yours to keep the context or, if you need one, here's a digital one:

www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=1Cr&c=13&v=6&t=NKJV

So, before I dig into the next verse (verse 6), I wanted to give a brief intro, then give an example. By the way, this is going to have to be in 2 parts - it's good stuff and I hope it blesses you as much as it did me :) ~

First off, this is a tough verse that will probably make all of us review things, but before I look at just some of its rich facets and depth of content, I want to first say that I'm not better than you or anyone else. You didn't expect that kind of start, probably :) Some people say I'm a leader. If so, it isn't because I'm fighting for that position, as much as I try to grow in understanding and following God's Word more every day, and encourage others to do the same - so in that way, I do try to set the pace and as God reminds me of truths and teaches me more depth, I try to share that with others around me. So, if I'm a leader, it's not because I'm more qualified than anyone else. No, on the contrary, I'm the same as everyone else. I have my good days. I have my bad days. I have times when I can really see God working in my life and using me, then I have days where I can't necessarily figure out which way is up, and/or how to figure out the days challenges, and I just have to persevere just to make it through the day. You see, that's why I said above that I'm not better than you - I'm just like you. Now you are probably wondering why I started with this thought - so, why do I emphasize that? *Simple*: you and I can both read the Bible and gain the same amount of truth and understanding from it, for ourselves - to help us grow every single day without anyone else's help (so long as we have the Holy Spirit, He's our Teacher) :) ~ I'm glad you allow me to share with you clear, literal Bible teachings that I believe to be in keeping with a literal study of God's Word, so that we might grow to become more like Him! And, I'm glad for your company and fellowship, I just don't want you to forget that I speak to you as a friend and for most of you - a brother in Christ, not as someone on a lofty post way up ^ there somewhere - :). And, to sort of conclude this little paragraph and drive the point home to your and my heart, check this verse out: **"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make [a] the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."** (1st Corinthians 10:13) ~ I hope you and I will continue to be able to fellowship together through the years in the Word of God, but even if we don't, just make sure you keep growing in spending quality time in God's Word, and obedience to what He is teaching you from His precious Word. Agreed? Good! :) And, I hope that everyone who reads the studies that I send out is also growing in becoming a clear, literal Bible student and teacher themselves, because I

know God has put people in your path that He wants you to teach about God's holiness and how to please Him - to sort of share with them what God is teaching you from His literal and living Word. If you haven't considered that, I hope that puts a good spark in there :) ~

Now, with that said, I'd like to look something I don't hear much about to prepare us to get the most out of 1st Corinthians 13:6. In Matthew 18 and a few other places, Jesus taught us that we have to come with a humble faith and a genuine want to obey Him, instead of holding tight to what we've become used to or so far have gotten away with. **"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven."** (Matthew 18:3) When we are younger, God allows us more grace, but as He teaches us more, He also expects us to raise our standards and remove things from our lives that draw us away from Him and back into the darkness and rebellion that He died to buy us and rescue us from. It's with that perspective, I'd like to look at 1st Corinthians 13:6 with that perspective.

So, several days ago, I happened to be at a friend's house and they were watching a guy lust after a lady and mistreat her, and then they watched him lie to her, flatter her and deceive her to manipulate her to take her virginity from her. And then they watched him use his words to verbally hurt others and he physically hurt others because these other people weren't doing what this guy was wanting. But, my friends never looked away or even said anything about how this was wrong - they almost seemed to be enjoying it. Then a little later, I saw another friend listen to a guy describe how great he was and how he was going to do some wrong things in his pride and he boasted about something the earthly stuff he owned and how great it was. I thought they'd turn away or maybe rebuke the guy, but sadly they didn't. I tried to figure out why, but the only thing I could figure is that they apparently really liked his rhythm or something... Then later, I saw another friend talking with a guy who was making light of and mocking obedience to God's Word, laughing at sin and talking about private things that should only be between those of the same gender (ladies with ladies; guys with guys) or within marriage. Yet, in addition to my shock of what all he was saying (since he claimed to be a Christian), what shocked me possibly more is that my friends who were listening to him didn't say anything, turn away or rebuke the guy either! They too seemed to be enjoying it. They even seemed to cheer him on because they... well, as best as I could tell, I guess they thought he was funny. And still later, I saw another couple of friends watching a lady show off her body and cause men to lust after her - making her a stumbling block for them... I thought for sure maybe the guy or at least his wife would talk to her and try to lovingly show her not to do this and/or maybe share the gospel with her - helping her to realize that she's not a piece of meat, but a beautiful creation of God who God created for a relationship with Him... but, they too didn't say anything to her or those who gawked as they walked by... I was very saddened to see them also cheering for this lady because of her talent and how she had good posture and other such unimportant things that the world makes much ado about...

But, you know what was even more sad? I actually witnessed in each of those situations (and more, sadly) that my friends who watched these things and talked with those people, actually became more like those doing what was wrong. That to me is completely crazy! Did they forget Whom they serve? Had He become so little in their eyes? Each of these people that I referenced in general say they believe in Jesus and yet they started to imitate the wickedness that was around them and the rebellion they watched, that they didn't speak up about. Why? I don't really know. Maybe... maybe they never noticed how silently they were slipping into darkness... maybe it's because no one warned them... until now.

If you didn't catch it, I just described most of what's on TV and in the music and the movies, and (sadly) how most of those who claim to follow Christ respond to the trash that's displayed on TV [*trash vendor*]. Hopefully, those who still watch most of anything on TV or listen to wrong music or watch most movies feel a little conviction - not condemnation, just conviction. [*I hope you'll note the difference :)*] ~ Christ always moves us to love more of His light and truth, Satan always entices us with sparkling packages of poisonous lies to more and more do what's pleasing to our self-centered flesh and to do only those things that we can get something out of. And continuing on that point, the more you and I fill our minds with the evil, fantasies, and lies of the culture around us - disguised as entertainment, the more you and I become *just like them*. My brothers and sisters, when we fall to that level, we need to ask ourselves: have we really forgotten Who bought us with His own precious blood? Have we forgotten that He didn't buy us to be mannequins for Him to show off, but to be those with whom He can have fellowship, and that we need to be growing in valuing what is right and hating what is evil, as He does?

When we see that we have fallen into darkness, we need to finally listen to and heed the voice of the Holy Spirit inside of us and continue to leave behind what is pulling us into sin. God always allows u-turns. (Did I mention the word **ALWAYS**?) If you see you need to repent and get rid of something - go ahead and do that now, or write a clear note that you can get back to later. :)

Okay, so now I think you see why I started the way I did. And, with those introductory thoughts, let's look at 1st Corinthians 13, verse 6 ~ So, let's dive in, shall we?

Here's the text: “[**agape**] does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth...” (1st Corinthians 13:6)

In this lesson, I plan to just look at the first half of this phrase - we can plan to look at the second half, in the next lesson.

Several weeks ago, I was talking with a sister in Christ, and she said something in a way I've never thought about really before. She noted that we do not seek to obey God because those are His rules. Instead, we need to regularly grow in understand of what He says, because we want to please Him. That's a vital difference - it's the difference between a 'have to' and a 'want to'. It's the difference between keeping

rules and please Christ. We need to make sure that we don't view His commands as a checklist or hardship or burden, but instead as a way to grow more like Him and to enjoy more warmth and deeper fellowship with Him who bought us with His own precious blood! And, of course, I'm referring to Jesus only. No one else fits that description. :)

You see the world has this mantra - they even say it: '*do what you love*'. Their actions come out of the abundance of their hearts and show what their heart loves. My question to you, as a Bible student and teacher - what do your actions and devotions show that your heart loves? Does it expose mixed devotions - to Christ and something else? Mine too. Then, do you think you and I can both work together to grow in making Christ our only devotion? :) That doesn't sound too hard, does it? It's just a growing process, in which we need to invest ourselves, but we won't until our hearts become tender and desire to learn more of God's ways and leave behind our own...

So, let's look at the first phrase literally: "[agape] does not rejoice in iniquity," ~ literally reads in the Greek (*according to Strong's Concordance*): '[agape] is not rejoicing [cheering, enjoying] the wrong [morally or legally wrong in character, act or life]'

(my favorite, and free, literal Bible analysis program:
http://scripture4all.org/download/download_ISA20.php)

That's a mouthful and a head-full. This is clearly teaching that we need to be careful in a couple areas.

Cheering

How often do Christians cheer for actors and athletes, not caring about their perverse or wrong lifestyle and anti-Bible religion? It happens a lot, doesn't it? What about competing companies? That happens a lot as well. As you can see quickly, what the world cheers, we need to lean away from. And what the world discourages, in many cases, we need to seek, cheer and honor those things and people.

Enjoying

Very similar to the previous idea, but this also hits on what you and I are comfortable with. Are we okay with that immoral person presenting themselves as a teacher, actor or athlete? Are we okay with watching 2 groups fight for who's pride will win on the field? Are we okay with watching murder, immodesty (guys and ladies), lust (guys and ladies), immorality, envy, strife, boasting, selfishness, blasphemy, dishonoring parents and authority and laws, stealing, etc - are we okay with those things? Then we shouldn't watch something that displays them as normal, should we? Put it in another way, how much are we okay with those things that God says are evil? We need to keep diminishing our personal choice to be okay with what God says is wrong, and increase our personal choice to be uncomfortable with evil, even a hatred, for what God says is wrong. Not a hatred of those doing the wrong, but a hatred of the

wrong itself, while we call for the person(s) doing the wrong to repent and get right with God.

This is a heavy lesson, we've covered much of what is in this text. I expect that probably all who read this will have a lot to think through - me too. So, I'll conclude with that. But, even with this lesson concluding, let's each of us make sure we take time to analyze our lives and our brains and our hearts and weed out more of our love for iniquity, sin, and rebellion against God, and even our choice to be okay with it, and seek to grow in a healthy discomfort (even hatred) of what God says is evil. That's a change that - though it starts on the inside, the more we do that in our hearts, the more it will show in our lives, and we'll have more of the fruit of righteousness in our lives, as well as a clearer conscience to better serve Him! I'll conclude with two short passages.

“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:11)

“Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word...” (Psalm 119:97-101)

Next time, I look forward to picking up on the good side: **“but rejoices in the truth...”** (1st Corinthians 13:6b).

For now, this is your friend, growing bro, a servant/life-slave of Jesus, signing off ~
tfn, SH