

Without Charity I Am Nothing

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[0 : 00] So, we've been week by week working on some material that's the Apostle Paul's I Am's, and as he's our authority and our Apostle to follow, then what he says he is, is something that we should take serious.

And this week's going to be a little bit different in the way it's worded, but I think there's something worthy of study, nevertheless. In 1 Corinthians 13, let's just read through the first three verses. The Bible says, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. 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 and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Now, if you're familiar with this chapter, it's the one that's known for its discussion on charity.

Many call it the love chapter, which is an incorrect word because the word love is not anywhere in the chapter. And charity and love are not the same thing. And if your Bible says love, then you should get a new Bible.

[1 : 20] And this is a different thing here. God chose the word charity for a reason, and it shows up through the New Testament. And really, the New Testament authors, the Apostle Paul and Peter for two, put a very, I mean, like very high price on charity.

That is, they exalt charity above all things. And so that's something that's worthy of our consideration tonight. But before we do that, let's pray together once more. Our Father, we ask that you speak to hearts, that you'll still our minds, and allow us to stay into the Bible now, into this text, and help me to be clear.

And I pray that your Holy Spirit would take the word of God and would make it alive, and minister it to each heart, and strengthen us, and reveal something in us, and help us in this area of charity. Help us to understand what Paul is conveying. And just please apply it, Lord, the way you do all the time. We ask in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So, unlike most of our other studies, where Paul displays who he is, or what he does, or these certain qualities, I guess, that we're supposed to strive after, this one's kind of a qualified statement, a conditional statement.

If this, then this. And in this case, if I don't have charity, then I'm nothing. If I don't have charity, it's of no value. If I don't have charity, then what I'm doing here is just making a whole lot of noise.

[2 : 46] And so this one's going to be a little different in the wording, and it's a little different approach to our study here of the Apostle Paul's I am's. But I believe there's a quality teaching to be considered here, as we're supposed to follow the Apostle Paul in our Christian life.

And he's really driving something home here that's worthy of our study this evening. So, like I said, New Testament authors place charity very, very high. And the Apostle Paul says, I'm nothing if I don't have it.

And so I'm going to ask you just point blank, do you have it? Do you think you have it? Do you think you possess charity? Because it's way, way, way, way, way up there.

And I'm not putting pressure on you. I'm just asking the question for you to think on and say, would anybody consider me a charitable person? And that's not about just giving money. It's a character. It's a virtue that is dwelling inside of you. And in this passage, it's essential in any area of ministry and doing anything for Jesus Christ and serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 51] Paul said in Colossians, for ye serve the Lord Christ, not without charity you don't. And so this study is going to try to point that out and not really open up what it is and so forth, but we'll just stay with what the Apostle Paul is talking about in these first three verses.

So the world says something like this. The world has this statement, you've all heard it, that the end justifies the means. It doesn't matter how you get it done. It's just really that you got it done.

That's all that matters. And no matter whatever steps you took to get there or rules you broke or people you offended, none of that matters because you were just supposed to get the job done and you got it done. The world says the end justifies the means, but that logic doesn't fly with the Lord. It doesn't fly because according to God, according to this passage, it does matter how you do it. It matters a lot how you do it. And God expects us to operate and minister in the right spirit, in the right attitude, with charity.

And otherwise, he's just not interested and he's not helping and it's you and your flesh. And so let's consider this tonight.

[5 : 03] So here's a few verses, just a couple things to condition your mind here. We're told in the Bible, this is not Old Testament, it's going to sound like Jesus, but this is Paul quoting it in Romans 12.

He says, bless them which persecute you. If thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. Do you suppose that when that statement is coming out from the Apostle Paul, putting it on you and I today, that as long as we just, fine, I'll give you something to eat.

Even though you're my enemy and you've done wrong to me, I'll do what I have to do because the Bible says so and I'm a Christian and I have to act like it, so fine, I'll do what I'm supposed to. Do you think that's going to fly? Do you think that's accomplishing what you're called to be as a Christian?

If there's no charity, you're not fulfilling anything. You're just doing it. It matters how you do it. Continuing this thought here, he says, we are to restore a fallen brother in the spirit of meekness. It doesn't say you restore him by threatening him or by exposing everything you can and making him, you know, dragging his name through the mud. You do it in a spirit of meekness. That's a condition of how to restore a brother.

[6 : 14] It's about how you do it. We are to submit to one another in the fear of God. We are to be kind. We are to be forbearing. We are to be forgiving. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

So it does matter how you do it. It does matter how you say it. It does matter how you relate and how you respond and how you minister to others if you're ministering for the Lord Jesus Christ. Because if charity's missing, then so is any profit that God would get or any pleasure that God would get or glory that God would get out of it.

So let me say, firstly, look at verse number one. Without charity, you're just wasting your words. In verse number one, though I speak, it's about him speaking.

With the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. I'm speaking. It's about Paul's speech.

[7 : 18] What does Paul speak? What is it? It's not just like saying good morning to somebody in the marketplace. This is about Paul's preaching. He's talking about the tongues of men or of angels.

As far as the tongues of men, just look a few verses before this. Two verses into the last chapter, verse 30, says, Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

He's talking about something that, a gift that was given to the minister, to the body of Christ to be used in the ministry early on here. And he mentions this in verse 10 of chapter 12 as well, when he calls it diverse kinds of tongues, doing other interpretation of tongues.

If I speak, if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I'm just making a lot of noise. Now, I don't want to do a Bible study on tongues tonight, but I believe Paul's referring to his preaching, to his teaching, and to his ministry of declaring the word of God.

In Acts chapter 2, when the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended and the cloven tongues like as a fire and a boat upon them, you know the story there where they all start speaking with other tongues.

[8 : 35] And that's not a bunch of nonsensical gibberish like you see on TV or locally in churches today amongst the Pentecostals. In that very passage, they said, we hear in our own language the wonderful works of God.

That's what they were speaking. They were speaking in different languages they had never learned. And yet in that chapter of Acts chapter 2, there's, I don't know, I forget the number if it's 13 or 15 different ethnicities, different languages, and these disciples of the Lord are all speaking to them in

their own language through these people groups.

And they're amazed at this miraculous thing. And that's what the tongues are. They're not some wild thing of, that sounds like you're speaking, I'm just, the ones I hear people make fun is like, hundala, shundalai, Suzuki, hunda, just say something stupid.

It doesn't have any coherency or any sense at all. But they pretend I was overcoming the spirit. We're not spending time on that. But without charity, Paul's preaching, his speaking, would just be wasting his words.

Without charity, it's only unnecessary noise. It's just wasting breath. It's what we would say is just a lot of hot air, Paul. And I've been in services, I've watched and listened to preaching where sometimes it feels like it's just a bunch of hot air.

[9 : 54] And you know why? Because there's no charity. And I'll have to admit this, I take this point personal. And I was even today in my office just pondering on this, not one of them amen, but OB, just to think, God, of I have a responsibility to speak and to teach and to preach and not just to stand and just pound and bless God, that's the truth, that's the way it is, and get everybody like, yeah, but rather to have a heart that says, no, I don't just want to proclaim the truth, I want God's people to be receiving the truth and to grow thereby.

And so it's in the delivery. And it's in the charity. Look back at Acts chapter 20. I will make a quick point here that Paul is referring to his preaching.

In Colossians, he talks about preaching Christ and he says, or he speaks of Jesus Christ, he says, whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man. And so how is it that Paul spoke when he spoke?

Acts chapter 20. And I'll start in verse number 18. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, you know from the first day that I came into Asia after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord, notice, with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying way of the Jews.

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 38] Later on in verse number 26, he says, wherefore I take to record this day I am pure from the blood of all men for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. I skipped a verse.

Verse 25, he says, and now behold I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more. So here's, I'm drawing these few things out here.

He says that he has not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God. In verse 25, he's preaching the kingdom of God. In verse 21, he's testifying to the Jews and Greeks repentance toward God, faith toward Jesus Christ.

He's teaching in verse 20. And you know how he's doing it? He even said, you know what manner I did all these things. In verse 19, I serve the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears.

Paul doesn't want to just be wasting his words. He doesn't want to just be looked at as some big mouth, some blowhard, some guy that gets up and just rambles and runs his mouth. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

[12 : 42] You this, you that. Blah, blah, blah. No, but Paul wants to get the message across and it has to come out of humility of mind. It has to come across with charity, even with tears, with sincerity so they would hear and realize this guy's not just condemning and barking but he's serious.

You consider, there's a big difference in how you inform somebody of their need for Jesus Christ and that without Christ, they're going to spend eternity in hell. But isn't there a big way, a big difference in how you could approach that and preach that and instruct somebody or as Paul said to testify and to preach the gospel?

You could just drop it on somebody, you're going to hell and that's true. But I think we covered this a few weeks ago, the same thought, how is that going to be received?

You're going to hell. You think you're better than me and you're better, we're in the same boat. But when it comes across with sincerity, with I don't, this is what the Bible says and I don't want this to be true for you and God doesn't want this to be true for you because he's not willing that any should, when there's sincerity coming from you, I mean they may not take it, but it sure does come across differently, doesn't it?

When there's charity, the content of your speech can be nonsense and it can be noise if the spirit of your delivery is lacking charity.

[14:14] So being right is not enough and just declaring the truth of the word of God is not enough. Paul says, I could do that but I'd just be a sounding brass.

I'd just be tinkling, just making annoying noises that's not helping anybody, it's driving them away instead. But Paul, you're preaching the truth but if it's got charity, if it doesn't have charity, I'm wasting my words.

Paul didn't waste his words. Paul exercised charity in his preaching. Paul likens himself to a nurse that cherisheth her children.

A nurse doesn't just slap and kick and slap and kick so that they do what he wants them to do but no, he carefully, patiently, with charity, works with them, teaches, edifies rather than destroys and runs off.

And like I said, I take this point personal to me more than to you that I need to have charity in my preaching and teaching and testifying. I need to have it.

[15:28] It needs to come out of this pulpit that I care and I want you to receive the word of God and grow thereby rather than just, bless God, I told them the truth again. Whether they hear or whether they forbear, that's between them and God.

And that's one stance you could take but I'll just be honest, over time, God's growing in my heart to I want, I don't want to kick you in the teeth. I want to help you.

I want to put a little bandage on if you need the bandage and nurture you back so that you're functioning and helping instead of gone. So without charity, Paul warns us, you're just wasting your words.

There's something else in verse number 2. Take a look back at 1 Corinthians 13. Without charity, you're squandering your skills.

Look at verse 2. And though I have the gift of prophecy, where'd you get that from, Paul? Well, I got that from God. The Lord Jesus Christ gave me revelation.

[16:33] What else do you have, Paul? Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries. Like, like Paul, you literally have all the answers.

I can talk, I met with a brother last night and talked some Bible with him for about two hours. And there was, there was one spot where he came in and said, listen, I'm not sure about that one.

This is what I think, but I can't tell you if that's for certain or not. But the Apostle Paul, where does he say that? There's one time where he says, there's some things that are just not lawful for me to utter.

I know more than I'm even telling you. So, without charity though, you're squandering these skills that God has given you. Look what he's given him, the gift of prophecy, understands all mystery and all knowledge.

Verse 2, continuing, it says, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing. So, we know the Apostle Paul is, I mean, he is, he has some real deal spiritual gifts, like excelling above anybody else in his day.

[17:45] He told us he was behind the other apostles in nothing. And if he were to boast and if he were to glory after the flesh, he would put every single one of us and them to shame. Spiritually speaking, ministry speaking, the Apostle Paul would be the total package if there ever was one in the New Testament.

And yet, without charity, this powerful pillar said, I am nothing at all.

I'm nothing. And yet, God has gifted me with this and with this and with this and with this and I've got it all. And I've got it all day long. And I've got it more than any of you.

But if I don't have charity, I'm squandering my skills. Imagine, just imagine this thought here. Major League Baseball, all of the scouts, they all catch rumors and word of a young prospect that has an arm like no one's seen for a long time.

He's throwing well over 100 mile an hour. He's got a heater. Nobody can touch him. And this guy can throw. They also heard that he's built like a tank.

[18:59] This guy is strong. He's got speed. He's got agility. He's even, you know what the best thing is? He's very likable and he's got a very teachable personality. And all the scouts are buzzing about this one guy.

We've got to get to see him. We've got to get a contract to him. We all want him. There's just one thing. He has all the tools and he's one in a million as far as baseball players go, but he's blind. And so, all of those gifts, all of that ability, that arm of 107 mile an hour fastball, but he can't see the catcher's mitt.

Those legs that can run faster than anybody else out there, but he can't see where first base is. Doesn't know where to go, where to stop. Can't shag a fly ball. All the ability, but without eyesight, he's useless.

He'll never play a game ever and it's not going to happen. And now, consider the ministry and ministering for Jesus Christ.

[20 : 08] The gifts don't make the man and you could be the total package and still be nothing. That's the last three words Paul said in verse 2. I, not my gifts, I am nothing.

The gifts are there. The gifts are not gone. The gifts in calling a God are without repentance, but I, am nothing. Even though I have all these gifts. And so, without charity, you're just squandering your skills.

Some men in the ministry, they've got skills, but they can't get out of their own way. And they see themselves as something and they expect their abilities to be recognized or even to get them a following.

And I've seen it. The more gifted they are, the easier that's, it is to do. The more gifted a man is, the just, it's natural for people to follow. I mean, look at every big ministry in the world.

They're not run by, I want to say dope heads. Some of them might kind of look like it, but they're sharp. They're smart. They're good looking. They're talented. They're gifted men.

[21 : 15] And they're all over the place in some of the bigger churches around the world. People will follow a gifted person, but they might be following a nothing.

They just might be following a nothing. If a man think he's something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. I wonder if you've ever realized this about yourself yet.

Look in the mirror and see yourself and say, I am nothing. No, what you want to do and what we do is, well, I have this and that separates me from them, so I'm better than them.

And they may be better than me at that, but this is what makes me unique and this is the gift and calling and abilities I have. And so, we recognize our own abilities and we love to tell other people about them.

We love them to shine and come forth from us and get glory is what our problem is. And without charity, all of that matters nothing.

[22 : 17] You know what it is? It's simple addition and subtraction. Let's work a little problem right now. Following the Apostle Paul's mathematics in verse 2.

Let's add to Paul the gift of prophecy because it was given as a gift to him. So, added to Paul is prophecy. Added to Paul is understanding of all mysteries.

Added to Paul is all knowledge. Added to Paul is having all faith so that he can remove mountains.

So, that's a pretty, I mean, we've really got a lot added to this man, but subtract one thing.

Subtract charity and you know what you're left with? Nothing. That's what the verse says. Nothing.

We all like to look at our gifts and abilities and say, see, I'm something.

But without charity, you're just squandering your skills and it equals nothing. I testify and transparently before you, I'm growing in learning this by the grace of God because he's gracious to me.

[23 : 37] I remember graduating as a young man, Pensacola Bible Institute with a real good Bible education and being surrounded by very dynamic and authentic and authoritative preaching and just feeling like, rawr, it's just, take on the world.

Anything that comes, I got a verse. Anything that comes, I know a Bible verse and I could run a chain, I could take you through 18 of them just like that, bang, bang, bang, full of the Bible, surrounded and shaped by good preaching, sound doctrine, entering the ministry with a skill set that I felt and thought was sufficient.

Doesn't matter how old I am, let no man despise thy youth. Scripture, Scripture, Scripture. But I had to learn something. It's the same thing Paul's talking about right here.

If you don't have charity, I'm nothing. The skills are just being squandered. I lacked something without which my ministry would be ineffective.

And I'm personally, according to Paul, I am nothing. Oh, but know the Bible, nothing. Not without charity.

[24 : 56] One more thing is in verse 3. Let's take a look at verse 3. And so far, without charity, from verse 1, you're wasting your words. It's just a bunch of noise.

And from verse 2, you're squandering your skills, those gifts and things God's given you. You're just a total nothing without charity. And then the third thing that Paul says in verse number 3, without charity, you're eliminating your effectiveness.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. He can bestow and just give and he can give his body to be burned like a martyr, like taking it all the way.

But there's no profit. He's eliminating his effectiveness without charity. Paul could put in some real extreme, very intense effort into the Christian life, like he's describing here, bestowing all my goods so that I have none left to feed the poor.

I could just give it all away. I mean, who does that? Nobody does that. That's very extreme. And giving his body to be burned, most people would do what they can to survive.

[26 : 17] It's just an instinct. And Paul says, I could go all the way and be a martyr and give my life to this. But if I don't have charity, the effectiveness of my service and my deeds and my great deeds are, well, they're ineffective without charity.

They're for naught. Who really wants to serve Jesus Christ and who wants to do right only to find out it's just all in vain and it's all worthless and meaningless.

You don't want to do that. You don't want that to be the client, the addition, sum total of your Christianity is just a puff of smoke at the judgment seat of Christ.

Well, then, you better get some charity in your service for Jesus Christ. Otherwise, your effectiveness is just being eliminated and it's going to burn.

Why does anybody do the things that they do in the arena of the ministry? Why does anybody do anything for Jesus Christ? Is it because you love Him?

[27 : 27] Is it because you feel obligated? Because He died for your sins? Is it because you want to be a blessing to somebody else or be a pleasure to the Lord?

Is it because you feel compelled to or just it's the right thing to do? Why does anybody do what they do? A lot of those answers I just kind of threw out sound, yeah, that's a good thing to do.

I want to be a pleasure to God. Yeah, I love Him. Yeah, I want to please Him and be a blessing to others. If it's related to the ministry and you expect there to be some profit, to be blessed of God, to be a man blessed of God in your deed, if you expect that, some reward, some fruit for your labor, if charity is absent, it's nothing.

It's unprofitable. Christians, we need to realize that God is not impressed with our knowledge, with our understanding, with our experience, or with the extreme measures that we're willing to go beyond anybody else.

It doesn't do it for Him. He'd rather see this priceless virtue inside of you. Charity. Charity is the vehicle by which all of God's gifts can be effectively ministered.

[28 : 52] And it's about bringing yourself back and bringing yourself down. Look at this little thought here. Paul says this in verse 3, And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, charity shouldn't look like I and my.

People shouldn't be seeing you in the ministry. You know what it should look like? Verse 4 and verse 5 and verse 6 and verse 7.

It should look like charity suffereth long. Charity is kind. I give my body to be... No, charity is not about a spectacle.

It's not about a spotlight on you. It's charity envieth not. Charity vaunteth not itself. It's not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly.

Thinketh or seeketh not her own. Is not easily provoked. And you can go on and read. That's what it looks like. That's what God wants to see in ministry.

[30 : 10] Otherwise, you're just eliminating your effectiveness. The Proverbs say, In all labor there is profit. profit. But that's not the case with spiritual gifts.

That's not the case with the ministry because there could be lots of labor but no profit. There must be charity. So, charity is an all-important virtue of the Christian life and your words and your gifts and your work for Jesus Christ can sadly all be for naught without charity.

And the apostle Paul says here, I am nothing without it. Now, we're not going into a full-on discussion and detail and study on charity.

It's a beautiful word and it's a lofty, lofty virtue. It's the bond of perfectness that Peter calls it.

I think it's at the end of this epistle. Let all your things be done with charity.

[31 : 21] Chapter 16, verse 14. Let all your things be done with charity. So, while we're trying to seek to be like the apostle Paul and be followers of him, there's one place we can kind of learn this conditional thing.

Well, if we don't have charity, we're just like he would be nothing, ineffective, just a bunch of hot air. And what's the point then? You feel like you're right?

You feel like you did something for Christ because you told him? Well, if it's not effective, then what did you accomplish? The answer is it profiteth me nothing. So, this is one that we have to learn and we have to adjust our thinking on and adopt that humbleness of mind and that meek and quiet spirit and seek to have charity that will edify the hearer and be a help and blessing and care for one another.

Not just, well, I could do this and my goods and I can give it to the poor and it's not about you. So, I hope that's something I can minister to you and consider those three things about your waste and your words.

You're squandering your skills and eliminating your effectiveness without charity. So, let's be dismissed with that at 7:30 and let's close in prayer and let's be dismissed.

[32 : 46] Father, we ask now that you'll go with us as we depart. Help us, God, to take these thoughts to heart, these truths from the scripture. God, give us a desire for charity.

May it pour from us. May others see that in us rather than seeing us. May the Lord Jesus Christ have full control. God, give us victory over our flesh.

Give us strength in the new man. Give us wisdom. We pray for those gifts as well, the understanding and the knowledge and the faith. May that grow in us and may we exercise charity as we minister to others.

Thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for this truth tonight that steers our minds this way to the way you say and to the Bible and help us to adopt it and to take it serious.

And I pray God there be fruit from this study in each heart and mind and life and we ask this in Christ's name. Amen. All right, you're dismissed. Thank you.

[34 : 34] Thank you.