

Love or Christian Charity

The correct meaning of the Bible word “Charity” is love. Not so much the affection that is shown between couples, or between parents and children, it goes beyond that, as we hope to illustrate. It is fundamentally the greater love of our fellow men and women.

When we consider charity, we think of it only in relation to the giving of gifts or labour or of organisations that do good deeds for free or a small charge. We even call them “Charities.” While it does include all these, it goes beyond even this and also includes affection, devotion, a regard for others, kindness, and goodwill one towards another. It is essential that all professing Christians should cultivate this quality, for it is the central theme around which the Truth of the Bible revolves. Whatever other qualities a person may possess, they are no use without love. Love in itself incorporates all other Godly characteristics, as the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 13:8-10

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Paul is very firm on this point, namely, that if we possess, show and develop love we have in effect done everything that God has required of us, we have fulfilled the Law.

When Jesus was asked by the scribe which was the greatest commandment of all, his reply showed beyond any doubt that love was the central theme, the embodiment of all other commandments, and the Jewish scribe also acknowledged this fact, (Mark 12:28-33)

We can see then that love is the real basis of the Truth. It is not something that only should be displayed by us towards others who love us and whom we love, but also incorporated in forgiveness by showing love towards those who do not show the same love towards us. (Matthew 5:43-48). This is the hardest part of love, showing it towards those who really despise and hate us.

Love has its origin in God, because “*God is love*”, as John tells us in 1 John 4:16. God does not profess to be something, which he is not, He is known by His works. The greatest exhibition of love that the world has ever known was given to us by God, who because of His love for mankind, and even though they were sinful, He offered up His own dear Son, Jesus Christ, to give mankind an opportunity to gain salvation through him. Now it is because of this fact, namely, because of his love for us, that we need to love Him. It was He who first showed the love, therefore we should love Him. 1 John 4:10

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Out of His love for us, God provides us with all those things that are so essential to us for our daily existence. He has also made provision for our future needs in that He has offered us a place in His Kingdom, if we in turn repay that love which He has first shown towards us.

God has every reason to be dissatisfied with the human race, because we fail to carry out our obligations towards Him. In His anger He could have destroyed them for ever, as He was inclined to do to Israel during the time of Moses; even then love was the deciding factor. For it was out of His love for the fathers of old that He withdrew His hand and spared them. That very same quality that was in God was shown forth in Jesus, because he knew that by his submission to his Father’s will, mankind would eventually benefit from it.

The advice of Paul is for us to endeavour, regardless of what difficulties lie before us to copy that example of Jesus. If we really appreciate the Bible and its teachings, we will always be trying to show forth our love towards others at all times. It does not matter what other activity engages our attention either in the Truth or out of it, it will profit us nothing at all if it is not accompanied by Love. Anything we are asked to do at home, do we do it grudgingly, or do we do it out of our love and our desire to help our parents? If not, it would be far better to refuse and to leave the job undone. 1st Corinthians 13:1-3.

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

We may have a fairly good gasp of what God requires of us, and we say we are able to present it quite capably to others around us, but all to no avail if not accompanied with love. Unfortunately little acts of kindness are so desperately lacking in each of us. How often do we try to make capital out of another’s faults? This is not love, Jesus is the real essence of that love for to love is to give, and give willingly, and this is what he did so that mankind might have a hope of life eternal.