

# If I Have Not Charity

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As we look at the world around us and the events that are taking place in every corner of the globe, it is easy to see that this entire world is in an advanced state of decline and that there is no turning back. As the bible foretells, this world is moving ever faster towards an unavoidable final cataclysm, that will culminate with the return of Jesus Christ to prevent the entire human race from being exterminated. Mankind is also in an advanced state of decline. The societies of the so called "civilized world" have changed dramatically in the past 40 years.

Our society has evolved into one of self concern, self indulgence and utter lack of concern and in many cases utter contempt for our fellow man. Even the simplest acts of courtesy, such as holding a door open for someone entering a building, have been abandoned. In fact, those that do try to offer some act of kindness are often publicly ridiculed for inconveniencing others, by attempting to help their fellow man. Our society has become one of lovelessness, without concern, capacity to care, or even to consider the plight of others around us. We are truly living in the time that Paul wrote of to Timothy:

## 2 Timothy 3:1-5

<sup>1</sup> But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup> traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Does this describe the society that is around us today? I believe it is a very accurate description and Paul says that we are to turn away from such people! We are not to have any dealings with them...period! That is not always an easy thing to do is it? It may mean that we have to seek out other avenues to conduct our business, or purchase goods and services, yet that is what we must do. Besides, do you really want to have anything to do with someone that has this attitude? Do you really think that they will have your best interest in mind? Don't believe it for a second.

My brother recently lost \$5,000 in a construction deal that went awry. My brother had wanted a shop built on his property for some time and had been working towards that goal.

He finally was able to put aside some money to have the shop built and contacted a builder who specialized in those types of buildings. The contractor required \$5,000 up front and a contract was signed. The contractor took the money and **never** began construction on the building. My brother has tried to pursue action, but has been met with obstacles every where he turns. He has been contacted by a detective who is investigating this builder. Evidently he has taken money from several other people as well. Why is this person still walking around and being allowed to swindle people out of their hard earned money? This is the society we live and work in. This individual has no care, or concern for anyone other than himself and he obviously has no morals or ethics either.

The reason we are admonished to turn away from these types of people is so that we do not become affected by their thoughts, attitudes and actions, or become victimized by them. We are to set ourselves apart from this world and not become like those around us. We must hold ourselves to a higher standard and allow the fruits of God's indwelling spirit to show in our lives.

#### **Revelation 18:4-5**

**<sup>4</sup> And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her , my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. <sup>5</sup> For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.**

Here we are told to come out of this world and its ways, we are to separate ourselves out as God's people. There are certain traits and characteristics that we are to be known by, that do show us to be separate from the people of this world. One of the chief traits that we are to exhibit is love. It sounds simple doesn't it, yet it is a multi-faceted and complex topic. What is love? Is it an outward profession, or is it something much deeper and meaningful? Why is the expression of love so important to God? We are identified by our capacity for love. It is so important that Christ spoke about it on the final evening that He spent with the disciples.

#### **John 13:35**

**<sup>35</sup> " By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another ."**

Those who follow Christ should be distinguished by their capacity to love one another. Jesus Christ is not just talking about an outward profession of love here; words are meaningless unless there is a genuine feeling and conviction behind them. The word used here is the Greek word *agapē*, it literally means love or affection and in the tense that is used here with this word, it means a deliberate or conscious act of love, to have affection for. This is the same love that husbands and wives should have for each other and the same love that Christ has for the church.

### **Ephesians 5:25**

**<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,**

It is a selfless, outgoing and genuine love that is unconditional. In other words, there is nothing that someone has to do to qualify for this type of love. It is a complete and total love, and acceptance of someone, no matter what sorts of faults they may have. We all have faults, we all have imperfections, we all have stains on our garments. Let's go back to John 13 and this time take a look at verse 34:

### **John 13:34-35**

**<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another ."**

This is so important that Christ institutes it as a commandment, it is law! Christ says to love as He has loved. This is so important that He repeats it again in chapter 15 of John, only this time He adds even greater emphasis to make His point.

### **John 15:12-13**

**<sup>12</sup> This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.**

How much did Christ love? He did just as He said in verse 13 that we just read. He laid down his life...He meant what He said. Can we say that we have that kind of love for each other? A lack of love is one of the signs that we are very near the end. God's people need to support, encourage and love each other...unconditionally. We are all in different stages of growth and we all have different traits and personalities.

It is inevitable that sooner or later, some of us will rub someone else the wrong way. In some cases there may be some personalities that just don't mesh well together, but that does not mean that we can't still be loving and forgiving of each other. We have already seen what is required of us. There is much more expected of us, than to just keep the letter of God's law. It is not enough to just keep the Sabbath, the Holy Days and to tithe and obey the other physical things that God requires of us. God's law goes much deeper than that. Christ took the Pharisees to task over this very thing.

God's law is designed to liberate us, not place us into bondage! Have you ever thought about that? Yet, there are those today, who acting as the Pharisees of old, want to make God's people slaves to rules and regulations. God brought his people out of bondage once! Are we to trade one form of bondage for another? In Matthew 23:23, Christ said that the Sabbath was made for man, and **NOT** man for the Sabbath.

I am going to use a few different translations to bring out this next point. Please turn to Luke 11:42.

### **Amplified Bible**

#### **Luke 11:42**

<sup>42</sup> But woe to you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every [little] herb, but disregard and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone.

### **Today's English Version**

#### **Luke 11:42**

<sup>42</sup> "How terrible for you Pharisees! You give to God one tenth of the seasoning herbs, such as mint and rue and all the other herbs, but you neglect justice and love for God. These you should practice, without neglecting the others.

### **The Living Bible**

#### **Luke 11:42**

<sup>42</sup> "But woe to you Pharisees! For though you are careful to tithe even the smallest part of your income, you completely forget about justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave these other things undone.

There is also a parallel scripture in Matthew:

### **Matthew 23:23**

**23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.**

The Greek word translated as neglected here, has several different meanings, among these are lay aside, forsake, put away and omit. Christ's meaning and intent are very clear. God's law is much, much, more than just physical requirements. God's law is a spiritual law, the physical requirements are important and must be fulfilled, but Christ is pointing out that the spiritual components are more important!

In Christ's own words here, we see the absolute importance of this matter. The physical requirements are the bare minimums we must meet. We are to grow and progress far beyond that, into what He calls the weightier matters of the law. Love is one very important and key component of God's spiritual law that is clearly absent in many organizations that claim to be God's church today. As I said before, the lack of love is a trait that is very much in evidence at the time of the end.

### **Matthew 24:9-12**

**9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**

It is almost beyond belief to think that people would be brought to this level, yet without God's law as a guiding force in their lives, there is nothing to govern their behavior. Because the law is missing, because everyone does what is right in their own eyes, there is no love. It is through an absence of love, that people come to a point where they betray one another and actually have hatred for one another. Make no mistake; Christ is talking about his followers here! They have degraded into this condition, because there is no love! Their only concern is for themselves. God's law and love go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other. It takes living and practicing God's way of life, to have outgoing love and concern for others and putting others above ourselves.

We cannot pick and choose whom we will love and whom we will not within the body of Christ. It is all, or nothing! It is very, very important that we get this right. Let us take a look at another scripture that emphasizes the love we must have for one another.

### 1 Peter 4:7-11

<sup>7</sup> But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. <sup>8</sup> And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." <sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

There is so much packed into this one single passage, that it bears a very careful examination. We are admonished that the time is at hand and that we should be watching and praying and also that we must be very serious about it. We should be crying out to God for His mercy and protection and that He would protect us from what is coming, so that we may not be deceived. Next, we should have fervent love for one another. What is fervent love? To be fervent is to have a great intensity of feeling.

We are to be sincere and genuine in our love for each other, to be concerned with another's welfare and wellbeing as if it were our own. We need to seriously reflect and consider each other's situations, trials and problems and treat them as if they were our own. If we offer help, it should be the same things we would do for ourselves, when we pray for others we should be able to pray passionately as if we were praying for ourselves.

Matthew Henry's Commentary contains a very insightful explanation of this particular part of this passage. **Please read this carefully:**

2. To charity: And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, v. 8. Here is a noble rule in Christianity. Christians ought to love one another, which implies an affection to their persons, a desire of their welfare, and a hearty endeavour to promote it. This mutual affection must not be cold, but fervent, that is, sincere, strong, and lasting. This sort of earnest affection is recommended above all things, which shows the importance of it, Col 3:14. It is greater than faith or hope, 1 Cor 13:13. One excellent effect of it is that it will cover a multitude of sins. Learn,

(1.) There ought to be in all Christians a more fervent charity towards one another than towards other men: Have charity among yourselves. He does not say for pagans, for idolaters, or for apostates, but among yourselves. Let brotherly love continue, Heb 13:1. There is a special relation between all sincere Christians, and a particular amiableness and good in them, which require special affection.

(2.) It is not enough for Christians not to bear malice, nor to have common respect for one another, they must intensely and fervently love each other.

(3.) It is the property of true charity to cover a multitude of sins. It inclines people to forgive and forget offences against themselves, to cover and conceal the sins of others, rather than aggravate them and spread them abroad. It teaches us to love those who are but weak, and who have been guilty of many evil things before their conversion; and it prepares for mercy at the hand of God, who hath promised to forgive those that forgive others, Matt 6:14.

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

Have you ever considered love for each other in this manner before? This is the love we **must** have and it is a fruit of God's spirit dwelling in us. He gives us the capacity to love each other in this way. This entire passage is focusing on how we should have love for each other, how we should act towards each other and how we should use the gifts we have been given and all of it is to glorify God through Jesus Christ. All of these things are made possible by Jesus Christ living in us and in turn through our actions God is glorified.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul calls love the greatest gift and it is...the ability to love someone else unconditionally is one that all of us should desire; not only that, it is one that Christ says that we **must** have.

I am sure that we have all heard and read this next passage many times, but please read through this slowly and reflect on the deep meaning and heartfelt emotion that Paul feels, as you read this next passage. He is pouring his heart out for us here:

### **1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

**<sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.**

<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part. <sup>10</sup> But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

<sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. <sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Those are absolutely beautiful words, inspiring, encouraging words. God is love, God is all about love and Paul well realized that. Who could be a more powerful witness than this man who once had hated and persecuted followers of Jesus Christ and then came to have such love and compassion for them, for Christ and for God? This entire passage is a very good place for meditation and reflection. Do we really understand what Paul is trying to get across to us here? Love matters, it is very important to God and it should be very important to us as well. God wants to see it on display in our lives and in our relationships with each other. It should be perfectly clear that God's law is **NOT** to be used to bring hurt, pain and punishment upon God's people. Paul makes it very plain here that anything we do, anything we understand, anything we have been given, is all for nothing if it is not used, given, or performed in love.

Jesus Christ displayed great love and compassion while he was on this earth, even for those rejected and despised by others. Are we capable of that kind of love, or do we draw the line at some point as to what sort of financial, or social standing people must be in, before we will display any love for them? Do we set a certain standard that a person must measure up to, to qualify for our love? Do we automatically spurn and judge others, just on someone else's word?  
***God help us if we do!***

## John 8:2-11

<sup>2</sup> Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup> Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst (notice they were surrounded here by all the people that had come to be taught by Christ), <sup>4</sup> they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. <sup>5</sup> Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" <sup>6</sup> This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

<sup>7</sup> So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." <sup>8</sup> And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst (notice they were still in the midst, so all of the people there witnessed what Christ had done to the woman's accusers). <sup>10</sup> When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

<sup>11</sup> She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

No one knows for sure what it was that Christ wrote in the dirt that day, perhaps each man's name along with a private sin that no one else knew about, or maybe some particular scriptures, but whatever it was, it certainly had an impact on the outcome of the whole situation.

There is a very important lesson here for each of us as well. God sees all, there is nothing that happens here on this earth that is beyond his ability to see and know about. We can fool ourselves and we can even fool others, but nothing escapes God's attention. More importantly, each of us has our own share of problems and areas where we are lacking and things we need to overcome in our own lives, without looking to point out problems with others.

Even these men, who wanted to trap Christ so badly, were not able to follow through with their intentions, when their own shortcomings were pointed out to them. Not only could they not condemn Christ, but they were also not even able to condemn the woman any longer. When faced with the problems they had in their own lives, they slunk away quietly.

If we stop to examine ourselves, instead of trying to put someone else under a microscope, there will be enough to keep us busy for a long, long, time. To have love, also means to put into **practice** forgiveness and to have mercy and compassion for one another.

### **Matthew 14:13-21**

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. <sup>14</sup> And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. <sup>15</sup> When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food."

<sup>16</sup> But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

<sup>17</sup> And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish ."

<sup>18</sup> He said, "Bring them here to Me." <sup>19</sup> Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish , and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. <sup>20</sup> So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. <sup>21</sup> Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

These are just a couple of examples out of many, that show the love and compassion Christ had for people at that time and still has for each one of us, individually, right now. Without that love, mercy, compassion and concern, where would each of us be right now?

We must be practicing love for God, His Son and love for our brothers and sisters. It is not a suggestion **IT IS REQUIRED OF US!!!** It is not something that should have to be feigned, or "worked up". It is a natural, outward manifestation that comes from having a close relationship with God, having His spirit dwelling within us and having His law written in our hearts and minds.

### **Mark 12:28-34**

<sup>28</sup> Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear , O Israel , the LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>30</sup> And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. <sup>31</sup> And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

<sup>32</sup> So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. <sup>33</sup> And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

<sup>34</sup> Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

In many ways this passage parallels the passage we examined earlier in this article, Luke 11:42. The same concept is being given in a different way. At this time the sacrificial laws were still in place, there were many, many sacrifices that took place during the day at the temple. These were physical requirements that had to be met, in accordance with the old covenant that was still in effect. Yet this man replied back to Christ that love of God and love of one's neighbor was more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices. Notice carefully what Christ replies to him here! Christ does not correct him in any way; instead He tells him that he is not far from the kingdom of God! Having love and giving love is very, very important!

Can you imagine how much the words of Christ cut the elders of Israel to the quick? That is why they hated him so much. He was tearing down their tradition and that was what they worshiped, the tradition they had elevated to such importance and made themselves and all of Israel, slaves of their own tradition. They were all in bondage! They were fulfilling the physical letter of the law, not the spiritual; you cannot have one without the other. We keep God's law, because we love Him, not out of fear:

### **1 John 5:3**

<sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

The elders of Israel just did not understand the spiritual aspects of the law. There was no love, no compassion and no outgoing concern; only their own tradition along with their own version and requirements of the law. Remember Christ's words:

## Matthew 15:8-9

**8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."**

Love is found approximately 214 times in the New Testament. Love is a very, very, important part of the gospel message that Christ brought to this earth. Yet it was there all along. God had given us this most vital component of His law right from the very start, the last six of the ten original commandments. Christ devoted a large part of His time here on this earth, expounding on the subject of love and our relationships with each other. Love is very important to God. Christ spoke about the love that existed between Him and the Father. We can all experience that love and extend that love, a genuine fervent love, to each other through God's spirit and Jesus Christ dwelling within us.

(All scriptural references cited from the New King James Edition of the Holy Bible)

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