**Charity: A More Excellent Way**

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1 Corinthians 12:31 KJV (31) But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Paul said that he would show the Corinthians a more excellent *way*, not a more excellent gift. There is a more excellent way to operate your Christian life that relying on the gifts. Paul will go on to say that the gifts will pass away.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 KJV (1) 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. (2) 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. (3) 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.

The more excellent way is *charity*. What is charity?

1 Timothy 1:3-4 KJV (3) As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, (4) Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. (5) Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

What is it that the Apostle Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to accomplish? He left him to accomplish godly edification in the local assembly. What, then, is godly edifying? It is being built up in the faith, (i.e. God's word) so that you will think like God and hence respond to the situations in life like God will respond.

The end of that commandment Paul gave Timothy (godly edifying in the local assembly) is *charity*. Charity comes from being built up in the faith. Charity is the result of being built up in God's word. Charity is the by-product of the Christian life; it the basis upon which the Christian life is lived.

Charity is not just going out and helping people. Lost people do that and do not have a care about God's word. Charity is Paul's word for sound doctrine working in someone. Lost people love, give money to the poor, do all kinds of humanly good things, but this is not charity. Charity is the end result of godly edifying and lost people are not being godly edified.

Charity comes from three things:

1. pure heart - justified person with sincere motives
2. good conscience - a conscience that is fortified with sound doctrine. (A lost person will have a seared or defiled conscience)
3. faith unfeigned - real faith, you genuinely believe God's word

When you function on the basis of sound doctrine, on what God says He is doing, and on the basis of who you are in Christ then charity is produced in you. This is the more excellent way than the sign gifts that Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 12-14. The more excellent way is for you to allow God's word to function in you; it is when you respond to the details of life based upon what God word says and that response is "charity".

Charity is the result of godly edifying, that is, being built up in the ways of God; it is being taught how God thinks. If you are built up in the way that God thinks it will change the way you think, and cause you to view the world like God views the world, and then you will respond to others like God responds to them.

How does God respond today? God responds today in grace, which is the essence of charity. Therefore when you are godly edified you are being a laborer together with God in what He is doing (1 Corinthians 3:9). *Charity is the reality of grace in action.*

There is a more excellent way to function in the Christian life than any of the sign gifts.

Colossians 3:14 KJV (14) And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Charity is the bond of perfectness, spiritual maturity, the capacity to function in and think through sound doctrine and apply that to situations in life. Paul records an example of how it is done for us in his letter to [Philemon](http://www.bereanworkman.com/books/rom_phile/philemon.htm).

2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV (16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Paul also tells the Corinthians that the sign gifts will pass away and if they choose to cling to them when God quit their operation then they will end up following the course of this world.