

**CHARITY VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF, IS NOT
PUFFED UP, DOTHT NOT BEHAVE ITSELF
UNSEEMLY (1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-5).**

***THE SPIRIT OF CHARITY
IS A HUMBLE SPIRIT***

(Sermon to the saints gathered at Westboro Baptist Church
in Topeka, Kansas, on September 15, 2019)

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. 4 ¶ Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 ¶ Charity never faileth – 1 Corinthians 13:1-8.

When considering this sermon—"The Spirit of Charity is a Humble Spirit"--three Bible verses immediately jumped out at me:

Isaiah 57:15: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

John 14:23: Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

It is very obvious that God is not dwelling with the proud, those that as a regular course of their lives vaunt themselves, are puffed up, and conduct themselves unseemly. And if it not dwelling with them when they're alive, he's not permitting them to enter his kingdom to dwell with him forever when they die, except for supernaturally implanted repentance which is manifested in their lives even if it is at the end of their lives, like the dying thief, to whom our Lord Jesus Christ said: **"To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."** (Luke 23:43). However, that malefactor hanging next to them, without saving faith, even when he was in the most humbling life condition imaginable (a crucifixion on the cross and at death's door), was still proud in spirit when he **"railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."** (Luke 23:39).

Let's look at today's exhortation (Acts 13:15): The spirit of real Christian love is a humble spirit. This exhortation comes from 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: **"Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly."** Phrased another way, in reference to what we ourselves may be or have, charity is not proud.

"Vaunteth" here means: a braggart; to boast one's self; a self display, employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one's self excessively. And, it has the meaning of being rash, which means displaying or proceeding from a lack of careful consideration of the possible consequences of an action.

"Puffed up" means in this verse: to inflate, blow up, to cause to swell up; to puff up, make proud; to be puffed up, to bear one's self loftily, be proud.

"Behave itself unseemly" here means: behave (one's) self uncomely; behave (one's) self unseemly; to act unbecomingly. The word, "unseemly" is used one other time in the Bible, at Romans 1:27: **"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet."**

Paul has just warned against envy as inconsistent with real Christian love, and now he warns that humility is the only spirit consistent with charity by these three expressions.

The Greek word, "vaunteth," used here is not used anywhere else in the Bible. But the meaning is taught all over the Bible. See, for example, 1 Samuel 25:21-34, which

tells about David's reaction to that son of belial, Nabal: concluding that Abigail was to be praised for her words "**spoken in season**" (Isaiah 50:4) and "**fitly spoken**" (Proverbs 25:11) which persuaded David to keep back from his murderous rashness. He originally planned to kill Nabal and every one in his house that "**pisseth against the wall**" for recompense of Nabal's gross insults. We read of David, who had been anointed to be king over all Israel, but was wrongfully denied that position by the murderous envy of Saul, from whom David was on the run for his life, in 1 Samuel 25:1-35, stopped in his own mission of murder, by wise words from Abigail: "**The LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid. ¶ And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.**" (1 Samuel 25:28-35) I suggest to you that the edification Abigail provided stuck with David in all his future dealings with many sons of belial he came across in his life.

Also, see Daniel 3:19-22, when Nebuchadnezzar "**full of fury**" against the supernatural faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the omnipotent, omniscient, and only wise God, got his own people burned up by his own fiery furnace in his rashness but not even the smell of smoke stuck to these three who proclaimed: "**O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden**

image which thou hast set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18). See also 1 Kings 20:10-11 (**“And Benhadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me. And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.”**), Psalm 10:5 (**“His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.”**), and Proverbs 13:10 (**“Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.”**), 17:14 (**“The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.”**), and 25:8-10 (**“Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.”**). Finally, see Ecclesiastes 7:8-9: **“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.”**

The sense I get is that this person who vaunteth himself is so full of his own self—he’s smarter, better, stronger, etc. (in his own mind)—that he believes that he doesn’t need to think outside of his current, brilliant self and consult with anyone about the wisdom of this or that course he is considering, because he knows it all. Most importantly, he doesn’t consult with God, who is described at 1 Timothy 1:17: **“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”** And at Jude 1:25: **“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”**

This word “puffed” up is to inflate, blow up, to cause to swell up, to puff up, make proud, to be puffed up, to bear one’s self loftily, be proud. There have been multiple sermons preached from this pulpit on the great evil of pride. Every June in the current world is know as “Pride” month for the sodomites and their enablers. This “puffed up” is nearly synonymous with “vaunteth.”

Poole’s commentary: “proudly lifting up himself above others, and swelling with high conceits of himself.”

Gill’s commentary: “swelled with pride, and elated with a vain conceit of himself, of his parts and abilities, of his learning, eloquence, wisdom, and knowledge, as the false teachers in this church were; knowledge without grace, unsanctified knowledge, mere notional speculative knowledge, puffeth up; but charity, or the grace of love, does

not; that edifies and preserves persons from being puffed up with themselves, or one against another.”

Matthew Henry Commentary: “Charity subdues pride and vain-glory; It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, is not bloated with self-conceit, does not swell upon its acquisitions, nor arrogate to itself that honour, or power, or respect, which does not belong to it. It is not insolent, apt to despise others, or trample on them, or treat them with contempt and scorn. Those who are animated with a principle of true brotherly love will in honour prefer one another, #Ro 12:10. They will do nothing out of a spirit of contention or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind will esteem others better than themselves, #Php 2:3. True love will give us an esteem of our brethren, and raise our value for them; and this will limit our esteem of ourselves, and prevent the tumours of self-conceit and arrogance. These ill qualities can never grow out of tender affection for the brethren, nor a diffusive benevolence.”

Philippians 2:1-3 **“¶ If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”**

The Bible repeatedly teaches: **“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God.”** (Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6-7, and 1 Peter 5:5-6).

Charity does not **“behave itself unseemly.”** The word means to behave one’s self uncomely or to act unbecomingly. Similar language and other Bible verses to assist with the meaning here are used at 1 Samuel 18:14, Isaiah 3:5, 1 Corinthians 11:13-16,18,21,22, 1 Corinthians 12:23, 1 Corinthians 7:36, 1 Corinthians 14:33-40, 2 Corinthians 1:12, Philippians 1:10, Philippians 4:8, and 2 Thessalonians 3:7. Trapp says: “Doth not disgrace any one.” Poole: “He doth not behave himself towards any in an uncomely or unbeseeming manner, and will do nothing towards his brother, which in the opinion of men shall be a filthy or indecent action.” Matthew Henry Commentaries: “it does nothing indecorous, nothing that in the common account of men is base or vile. It does nothing out of place or time; but behaves towards all men as becomes their rank and ours, with reverence and respect to superiors, with kindness and condescension to inferiors, with courtesy and good-will towards all men. It is not for breaking order, confounding ranks bringing all men on a level; but for keeping up

the distinction God has made between men, and acting decently in its own station, and minding its own business, without taking upon it to mend, or censure, or despise, the conduct of others. Charity will do nothing that misbecomes it.” In an affirmative way, Paul puts it like this: **“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some,”** (1 Corinthians 9:22) and **“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.”** (Romans 15:2).

I suggest to you that humility may be defined as a habit of mind and heart matching our comparative unworthiness and vileness before God. The rule of the apostle at Romans 12:3: **“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”** This humility implies a sense of our own comparative unworthiness as compared with God and as compared with our fellow intelligent creatures.

Abraham expressed our nothingness as compared with God: **“And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.”** (Genesis 18:27). Above all other things it concerns us to know of ourselves, is, what we are in comparison with God, who is our Creator, and one in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and who is infinitely perfect in all things. (Acts 17:28; Matthew 5:48). A humble man is sensible of the small extent of his own knowledge and the great extent of his ignorance, and of the small extent of his understanding as compared with the understanding of God. He is sensible of his weakness, how little his strength is, and how little he is able to do. He is sensible of his distance from God; his dependence on him; and the insufficiency of his own power and wisdom; and that it is by God’s power that he is upheld and provided for, and that he needs God’s wisdom to lead and guide him, and his might to enable him to do what he ought to do for him. He is sensible of his subjection to God, that is the sovereign Lord and King over all; and he is willing to be subject to that authority, as feeling that it becomes him to submit to the divine will, and yield in all things to God’s authority.

The truly humble man is also sensible of his moral vileness and filthiness as a sinner. He sees how exceedingly polluted he is before an infinitely holy God, in whose sight the heavens are not clean. (Leviticus 11:45; Job 15:15). Isaiah, under this proper sense of his unworthiness, when he saw God’s glory, cried out: **“Woe is me! for I am**

undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”(Isaiah 6:5). This humility implies self-abhorrence, such as led Job to exclaim: **“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”** (Job 42:5-6). It also implies such contrition and brokenness of heart as David speaks of when he says at Psalm 51:17: **“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise;”** and such, too, as Isaiah contemplated when he declared at Isaiah 57:15: **“Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”** And both the sense of our own unworthiness, and the sense of our moral vileness before God, are implied in what poverty of spirit which the Savior speaks of when he says at Mathew 5:3, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

And in order to fully sense our own unworthiness, it is not only necessary that we should know God, and have a sense of his greatness, without which we cannot know ourselves, but we must have a right sense of his excellence and loveliness. The devils and the damned spirits know right well his greatness, wisdom, omnipotence, etc. as implied in James 2:19: **“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble;”** but they have no humility, nor will they ever have, because they see and feel nothing of his loveliness. And, without this, there can be no true humility without simultaneously feeling the distance from God’s loveliness. From such a sense, persons are made sensible how unworthy they are of God’s mercy or gracious notice. Such a sense Jacob expressed at Genesis 32:10: **“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant;”** and David, when he exclaimed at 2 Samuel 7:18: **“Who am I, O Lord god? And what is my house, that thou has brought me hitherto?”** The context of these declarations of faith are very important; of grand significance to them and to us. And such a sense have all who are truly humble before God.

Implied in a humble spirit is corresponding behavior and conduct. The humble heartily and freely acknowledge their unworthiness and vileness before God, and confesses they are unworthy of any mercy, and deserving of all misery. So, their disposition is to humble themselves in the dust in God’s presence. (See Bible

authority above). They are distrustful of themselves and are dependent upon God only. It is with delight that they cast themselves wholly on him as their refuge, righteousness and strength. The humble renounce all the glory of the good they have or do, and to give it all to God. Psalm 115:1: “¶ **Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.**” Their heart is inclined to full and absolute subjection to the divine will; and they are equally disposed to be subject to the providence and daily disposal of God, and to submit cheerfully to his will as manifested in what he orders for them; and are ready to say with Job (Job 13:15), “**Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.**”

The Gospel that we preach teaches humility. While there is no humility as it is properly defined as a characteristic of God, yet his condescending work as portrayed in the Gospel teaches humility. Philippians 2:5-11: **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**” To send his only-begotten Son to die for his elect, that they might be forgiven, and elevated, and honored, and brought into eternal fellowship with him, and to the perfect enjoyment of himself in heaven forever, reveals to the humble soul that it is becoming to them to be clothed with humility in all their words and ways. 1 Peter 5:5: “**Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.**” If our Lord and Master is humble, and we love him as such, certainly it becomes us who are his followers and servants to be so too; for surely it does not become the servant to be prouder or less abased than his master. For this proposition I give you: Matthew 10:24-25, John 13:13-16 and Matthew 20:25-28. “**The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?**” “**Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say**

well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The Gospel leads us to love Christ as a crucified Savior. He suffered the greatest ignominy and death, though he was the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8; James 2:1). God did this, as it were to pour contempt on all the earthly glory men are wont to be proud of, in that he gave him, as the Savior and Head of his elect people, to appear in circumstances so far from earthly glory, and in circumstances of the greatest earthly shame. And Christ, by being willing thus to be abased, and thus to suffer, not only cast contempt on all worldly glory and greatness, but showed his humility in the clearest manner. The Bible teaches the Lord shall stain pride, and he is able to abase all those that are lifted up (Daniel 4:37). Isaiah 23:9: "**The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.**" If we, then, consider ourselves to be followers of the meek and lowly and crucified Jesus, we shall walk humbly before God and man all the days of our life on earth. Certainly, the LORD of hosts hath purposed it! Isaiah 14:27: "**For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?**"

The mere fact that Christ was crucified is a great argument for the humility of us who are his followers. But his being crucified **for our sakes** is a much greater argument for it. For Christ's being crucified for our sakes is the greatest testimony of God against our sins that ever was given. It shows more of God's abhorrence of our sins than any other act or event that God has ever directed. The measure of God's abhorrence of our sins is shown by his having them so terribly punished, and his wrath so executed against them, even when imputed to his own Son. So that this is the greatest inducement to our humility that can be presented, is shown in two ways: because it is the greatest manifestation of the vileness of that for which we should be humble, and also the greatest argument for our loving the humble spirit which the

gospel holds forth. The excellency of Christ, and the love of Christ, more appear in his yielding himself to be crucified for us, than in any other of his acts, so that these things above all things tend to draw from on our part the exercise of humble love.

Hebrews 12: 1-3 “¶ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” John 15:9-17: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

I love you. Amen.