

Generalizations from 1 Corinthians 13  
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From 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. LOVE-- A FEW GENERALIZATIONS

#1. PRACTICE DOES NOT GENERATE MEANING; RATHER, MEANING GENERATES PRACTICE. Practices such as "speaking in tongues" (v. 1), "prophecy," comprehension of "mysteries," increased "knowledge," even a "faith that moves mountains" (v.20); "giving away possessions to feed the poor," and "giving the body to be burned" (v. 3) do not in themselves generate meaning.

In this case the meaning is "love." Paul's point: "Love"/meaning precedes practice; and, in fact, *validates* it. Without meaning, the practice is as "a noisy gong" or "a clanging symbol" (v. 1); "Paul says "I am nothing" (v. 2); "it profits me nothing" (v. 3.) In other words, without the meaning all practice is meaningless.

#2. The Gentile Christians in Corinth consciously chose practice over revealed meaning. This is a routine exchange in Scripture. It happened in

- Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve;
- 2 Samuel 24 when David numbered the troops;
- Numbers 13, 14 at the point of Israel's faithlessness
- ---It was all about practice over meaning in those cases.

#3. MEANING/"LOVE" SITS ON A CONTINUUM.

This continuum has three factors: It begins with

A) "Love"/the meaning --> and then proceeds to

B) The conversion point where "love" is converted --> into

C) Practice (herein the practice becomes the realization of meaning. Here then is the sense of the apostle's language manifold.

#4. Practice is incapable of generating meaning. But some believers in the churches are greatly inclined toward practice as the heart of religious experience. This is a categorical mistake.

#5. The Christian religion is not primarily about religious experience, but about revealed meaning.

In the contemporary churches practice overrules meaning, or it passes for meaning. And so biblical meaning can be safely eluded in those churches. Beware.