

### Brotherly Love

There is much talk of love. The need for people to tell them that you love them can be helpful, but the better way is to show people that you love them. Many talk about loving God and Jesus, but actions speak louder than words. It is not enough to mouth something when you ignore what they say and do not bother to listen when they take the time to set out what is most important to them.

*Philadelphia* is a word transliterated from the Greek into English which means “love of the brethren”. The word occurs five times in the New Testament here and also 1 Thessalonians 4v9, Hebrews 13v1, 1 Peter 1v22 & 2 Peter 1v7. In addition, there is the word *Philadelphos* in 1 Peter 3v8 which is a similar word using the singular “adelphos”, rather than the plural *adelfhia*. *Adelphotes* is also used once. That word is translated as brotherhood, a community having that relationship. It is not sexist to use brother only and not sister, but kinsman is perhaps nearer in meaning than brother in most cases. In a similar way that mankind is used, not womankind or humankind. All the believers taken together are part of the bride, not because all are female but because it reflects Christ’s unique position relative to everyone else.

1 John 3v14 is very important in this consideration. “*We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death.*” Identifying who your brothers are is crucial, as failure to do so will lead to an inability to love them properly. You cannot love the world in the same way as you love your brethren. 1 John 2v15. This is why the Apostolic Ecclesia places emphasis on identifying who your true brethren are, rather than false-brethren, who are not brethren but false, merely pretending to be something they are not and therefore to be rejected. Hence in Matthew 18v15-17 when Jesus commands his disciples how to treat former brethren who refuse to receive the appropriate discipline he

enjoins; they are to be treated as heathen men and publicans, so those who are not believers = heathen and those joined to the world = publicans.

So how are we to love another? Paul says in Thessalonians that he will not write because they had already been taught of God about how to do this. Accordingly, it is not something that comes naturally but is a first principle taught by God in His Word, and not the subject of additional supplementing by the apostle.

Hebrews insists that the exhibition of brotherly love must continue. It can easily fade then if not worked upon.

First Peter adds the need to begin with a purity of heart and soul. Our hearts when we were born were desperately wicked because possessed by sin within become transformed into something else by the introduction of the Spirit and purification takes place when the Truth is obeyed. Obedience is a part of the key to unlock this change.

Second Peter reminds us that although this unfeigned love must begin after we obey in the waters of baptism, the acclimatisation into true Philadelphia is not the first attribute to be achieved by the penultimate, only agape is afterwards. Before brotherly love six other steps are to be worked upon.

First Faith

Second Virtue

Third Knowledge

Fourth Temperance

Fifth Patience

Sixth Godliness

Only then do Philadelphia and Agape (sacrificial love). Sometimes we feel that we already love God and our fellows fully when we are

baptised, but this passage reminds us that there is work to be done first before these aspects can be properly achieved.

The passage in Romans also lists aspects to be exhibited which demonstrate that the heart of the disciple has been touched by the new man.

In honour preferring one another. Put others before yourself avoid self-aggrandisement, let others give any status that you might have do not take it. If you need to enforce it, you do not have it.

Not slothful in business. Those who claim service to God must be diligent in business first. The responsibility of service in the Ecclesia must not be given to any not properly employed. If employment fails, this is a priority to address which will otherwise restrict your service to God.

Fervent in spirit. Those who lack enthusiasm are stunted. It can be shown differently in different people, but others must see it manifested in appropriate ways. Fervour can be misdirected.

Serving the Lord. All are servants including the shepherds and elders. Service is first to him. Ensuring that all we do is affected by our association together in Christ.

Rejoicing in hope. We must rejoice together, in song in expression in thankfulness, we do not need to rejoice identically but if we are blessed of God, as we are, we should be able to convince others of that blessing.

Patient in tribulation. As in 2 Peter, patience must be worked upon, so that when we suffer, as we will, we can do so patiently. Those who suffer more are fuller examples to others of patience endurance. If we suffer little this means either something is wrong or that we have a very small role in the Truth.

Continuing instant in prayer. Always be ready to pray. God should be so real to us that we think of talking to Him. We should ask for His blessing often. Do not just work out your own plans ask Him!

Distributing to the necessity of saints. The necessity of others is best determined locally. Who can say from many miles away what is really necessary? Charity then should begin at home where we can more easily judge necessity by our own experience and cultural requirements. Having a car is deemed necessary to some which may be true for them, but not in all circumstances.

Given to hospitality. Like Hebrews, extending day to day compassion to those who visit is something we should all do. Hospitality in the Truth should be something an addition to what society at large offers in our cultural norms. Fitting in with that type of hospitality is not enough.

Bless them that persecute you. No one really finds it easy to do this, but we must strive to do so. Loving our enemies is important and should be a recognised feature of those claiming the Truth even if in a lesser way than loving one another, *“by this shall all men know that you are my disciples”* John 13v35.

Rejoice and weep with others. Have an affinity with others, do not act in isolation. If one is sad and another rejoicing it can be hard to find the balance, but our moods should be affected by our companions. Having no joy or sorrow to share is selfish.

Be of the same mind one to another. This does not mean that we are to be identical in our thoughts but united in purpose and motivation. If our brethren and sisters can no longer motivate us something is wrong either with them or ourselves! An appeal to our unity of mind should carry force for true believers. This should work both ways if reciprocation is not possible something is wrong.

Mind not high things. Avoid the vain issues of pride, identify them for yourself early, if you do not you will be more easily overtaken by such. Do we need such an expensive powerful car, would a more modest one not suit our purposes better? Is our job, a job or is our career our emphasis rather than the Truth?

But condescend to men of low estate. Speak to the manual workers not just the supervisors. Engage with all your brethren and sisters not just the elders.

Be not wise in your own conceits. Let others value you, there should be little need to thrust yourself forward if you are doing the right thing, others will engage with you, in a multitude of counsellors there is safety, be wary if you are not receiving support for any suggestions or plans you propose.

Recompense no man evil for evil. Feel hard done by, perhaps even at the hand of those you thought would be more supportive? Do not retaliate in kind, show your service to Christ by turning the other cheek.

Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Outside scrutiny whilst not sought by believers should be acknowledged as relevant. If we claim righteousness as we must, our integrity must shine forth.

Live peaceably with all men. Find a way to live with others who may resent your faith and were perhaps even former brethren.

There is work for each and every one of us in these many requirements and commandments. Who can say that we have yet achieved Philadelphia, love of the brethren? Let us continue on our chosen path brothers and sisters and encourage others to join us or return so that together we can achieve more.

A Voice from the Altar

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