

THE REAL LOVE OF THE BRETHREN

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For those filled with the miracle working power of God, a knowledgeable and Spirit inspired lifestyle is essential. This requires an intimate understanding of God's purposes and values. We need to be aware that the scriptural principles we choose to prioritize, will determine whether we keep growing and prospering spiritually, or whether we fall short of the promised blessings that the Lord has offered us. First and foremost, the local church is part of the whole family of God... the body of Christ. Every church is a family structure in its own right with many of the apostles confirming this principle with the very personal content of their epistles. Family attitudes and priorities should be the driving influences behind every blessing and all overcoming. The following is a series of scriptures that reveal the extent of this great truth.

This verse reveals a new commandment, one that summarizes the heart and mind of Christ.

JOH 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. This is the only addition commandment spoken by Christ and relates to being in harmony with God's purposes... this also being a summary of the great truths contained within the 10 commandments.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

I Corinthians chapter 13... everything is meaningless unless this selfless love is the driving force in your life.

The two spiritual principles relating to our true communion with God.

1COR 10:15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ (*our fellowship with Christ in the Spirit*)? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ (*our fellowship with each other*)?

17 For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers (*have a part*) of that one bread.

This is the measure by which we are asked to judge our performance as the members of the body of Christ.

1COR 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. *Not having an understanding of the task at hand and the principles of fellowshiping.*

30 For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. *This is the result of not serving god according to his priorities. People will miss the mark and fail through laziness or contention.*

Taking God seriously is critical.

Malachi prophesies some of the failings that lead to weakness that Paul identifies. He reveals that people's priorities are not the same as God's.

MAL1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD [is] contemptible. *The deformed animals are akin to our attitudes about the way that we serve and handle the word of the Lord. Your prayer, fellowship, reading, witnessing etc., should not be from the dregs of your time or your commitments. They need to be your priorities and part of your healthy dedication to the Lord.*

8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, [is it] not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, [is it] not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. *Don't offer God your leftovers. Where would you be if you treated the law of the land the same way you treat the Lord.*

MAL 3:7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept [them]. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. *The Lord considered that ten percent of all the increase of the land was His property and was to be offered to the priesthood. That is where their living was to come from. This part of God's plan is just as valid as any part. If you can't trust God for your natural welfare, there is no way you are going to be able to trust him with your life.*

9 Ye [are] cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, [even] this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house (*it is your responsibility to make sure that the church is able to function... this takes money*), and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that [there shall] not [be room] enough [to receive it].

Many miss the point about the flow on effects of their attitudes. If you rob God, you rob the body of Christ, the people in your church. If you offer poor quality fellowship you rob God as well. Your actions will help shape the way that others perceive God and the church. Second-rate actions promote second-rate fellowship... for all. Equally, there are very positive flow-on benefits from effective commitment.

There are two main causes for people who miss the mark... laziness and the promotion of criticism, resulting from ignorance of God's principles (most often driven by pride and personal zeal). These problems were prophesied to increase alarmingly at the end of this age.

The value of prophecy has never been more helpful than for those seeking to avoid these latter day curses.

2TIM 4:1 I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season (*at God's convenience, not yours*); reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. *It always comes back to a patient promotion of the bible themes.*

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, **having itching ears**; *People are going to search out all the 'spectacular' or 'spiritual' experiences and doctrines, because a love of the truth and a love of God's people is not their first priority. They are feeding their own bellies rather than serving the weak and needy. They serve for glory, not for humility.*

4 And they shall turn away *their ears* from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

1PET 4:17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? *This is best done as Paul outlined during 'communion'.*

There are people who are going to be more interested in their own opinions than the health of the fellowship.

ROM 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. *These people care only for themselves, otherwise they would be fighting to improve the church and its people... in the end they abandon all those they think they love.*

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly (*personal urges*); and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. *True loves maintains its integrity.*

True shepherds are hard to find (we are all shepherds in one way or another).

If you don't know what the love of God is, then you will never be able to develop nor exercise it. God wants all of us to take personal ownership of all those in our fellowship. Not the 'generic' love where we feel good about all God's people, etc. It is impossible to love with the love of God unless you have a lasting care for those with whom God has placed you. The family unit is the underpinning feature of our society, just as personally responsibility underpins church families. The hiring mentality maintains little loyalty to personal church family, but rather moves from family to family, because their life is all about them, and not about specific God given families. They do not hold a true love of the brethren.

Shepherds aren't the only ones who fail the love test. Many family members learn to find fault in their church, because their heart is ego driven and not love inspired. God wants us to love those in our care the same way we love our own children or parents. You cannot give up your family any more than you can successfully wash your hands of those God has given you. Many leave, but end up in a worse position than the one they started in. They lose the love of the truth, because they have turned their back on very clear bible responsibilities. Many move to emotive or hype driven ministry, or follow personalities; to try and convince themselves that they have found something better.

PHI 2:19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. *If Paul struggled to find real men of love, then we shouldn't be surprised when we cannot find all that many ourselves. This also explains why many go from one fellowship to another... they do not have a real love of the brethren, their love is shallow and self-fulfilling.*

We have been placed in a family of Christians for a purpose... there is a specific job to be done.

1COR 7:20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. *It is not about you...*

21 Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather.

22 For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant. *God has a job for you to do... how are you going to find out what it entails?*

23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. *Not through natural understanding.*

24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. *God has placed you for a reason.*

HEB 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. *Enduring commitment cannot be faked, because it is a true act of love.*

10 For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence (*of loving the brethren*) to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

This is what the strong (loving family members) do.

ROM 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and **not to please ourselves.**

2 Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. *Putting others ahead of ourselves... this cannot be faked either. This is not something you do once a month, or even once a week... it is an every minute of the day attitude, because it is Christ's will! The way of all true Christians.*

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. *Not by 'spiritual feelings' or 'feel good' perceptions, or self righteous values.*

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: *There is no room for 'critics' in a fellowship... those who see problems should be part of the solution, not part of the undermining of men's faith. Remember, God hates the gossip more than the adulterer!*

6 That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

ROM 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. *God never asked us to love everyone... only those in our care and those we contact.*

1PET 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Promote unity, not division.

1COR1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no **divisions** (*tear or rip*) among you; but *that* ye be **perfectly joined together** (*repaired*) in the same mind and in the same judgment. *Personal differences are to be resolved through our common and higher purposes of serving God through promoting and living the gospel... by faith and works. Not through abandoning your flock.*

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. *The first contention discussed here relates to personality differences.*

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? *It's about God, not you.*

Help is offered to both the weak and the ignorant ... be subject one to another. Mentor, gender responsibilities.

GAL 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. *We all need mentors... supportive friends... make some!*

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. *Bear burdens, don't create them!*

GAL 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. *This is the 'new commandment' that Jesus gave us.*

A healthy attitude to fellowship is the most beneficial attitude that we can develop... then we will understand what the true love of the brethren really is.

HEB 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

1PET 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto **unfeigned** love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: With total, uncompromised sincerity.*