
Words of Truth

If Thy Brother Hath Ought Against Thee

By: Brian A. Yeager

Jesus said: *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). He then went on to teach this: *"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"* (John 15:9-17).

Some of the so-called "brethren" I have met over the years seem to think that they can have a relationship with God without having a righteous relationship with faithful brethren. Not only are the commands you just read abundantly clear, but other Scriptures establish that our salvation is just as dependent on our relationship with faithful brethren as it is with God. Remember, faithful brethren are those whom are doing the will of the Lord (Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, and Luke 8:19-21).

Once we establish that a person is a faithful brother or sister in Christ, our salvation depends on us loving that brother or sister. Notice: *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen"* (I John 3:14-15 and I John 4:20)? The love we are to share as brethren is not shown through words, but through lawful actions (I John 3:16-18).

Being in the light and walking aright is a connected relationship, a fellowship, with God **and** faithful brethren (I John 1:3-7). Our relationship with God is very much tied to our relationship with our brethren. You cannot have one without the other. Thus, when our relationship with our brethren is broken so is our relationship with God. You can see this in how disciplinary action taken upon unfaithful brethren is known as delivering that erring Christian to Satan (I Corinthians 5:1-8 and I Timothy 1:19-20). Knowing these truths, how could any faithful Christian be at ease when they are at odds with a faithful Christian? What should be done?

When At Odds With The Faithful The Erring One Must Fix The Relationship

If you have given a faithful Christian a reason to have something against you, Jesus says YOU must fix that before you can come to God. Notice: *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”* (Matthew 5:23-24). We do not come before a physical altar to worship now (John 4:23-24 and Hebrews 9:11-10:20). However, the principle applies. In fact, it applies even more broadly in that life is our altar and we continually offer sacrifices to God as Christians (Romans 12:1-2 and Hebrews 13:10-15).

To illustrate this point, consider how we come together each first day of the week to remember the Lord's death (Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 11:23-26). In the instructions concerning how to partake of the Lord's Supper, notice what we read: *“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world”* (I Corinthians 11:27-32). Now, how could a Christian sit, remember the Lord's death, examine himself or herself, realize there is a fault, and just continue on remembering the Lord's death?

The fact is, if a Christian has given reason to a brother or sister in Christ to have a problem with them; that MUST be fixed BEFORE worshipping God. Whether or not that relationship can be restored will be dependent upon the sinners repentance (Luke 17:3-4). So, to make this clear, if that problem exists you are not to come worship the Lord unless you are reconciled with that brother. The principle behind that is seen throughout the New Testament (Matthew 18:15-17, Romans 16:17, II Thessalonians 3:6, and II Thessalonians 3:14-15). Since repentance is the key to the reestablishment of fellowship with our brethren and God; let's briefly highlight a few points on that subject matter.

A Brief Summation On Repentance

This is brief, as a highlight of a few things. True repentance is going to be visible (Ezekiel 14:6, Matthew 3:8, and Acts 26:18-20). Godly sorrow will be at work (II Corinthians 7:9-10). Past righteousness will NOT be taken into account (Ezekiel 33:13). Restitution may be necessary (Ezekiel 33:14-16 and Luke 19:1-10). Physical distress will be present (Job 42:6 and James 4:6-10). Rebuke will be accepted (Acts 8:13-24). ALL of that, and more, is required in repentance.

Conclusion

How a supposed Christian could worship while at odds with another saint is beyond me and Jesus. Our relationship with our brethren should receive preference (Romans 12:9-10 and Galatians 6:10). You CANNOT love God without loving your brethren (I John 3:10).