
Words of Truth

“Above All Things Have Fervent Charity Among Yourselves”

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We live in a world wherein we should feel out of place (Proverbs 29:27, John 17:14-16, Romans 12:1-3, and I John 4:1-6). God is obviously our place of refuge (Psalms 46:1, Psalms 46:7, Psalms 46:11, Proverbs 14:26, and Hebrews 6:18). However, God does not desire to be our lone source of comfort and companionship. From the beginning of creation God stated that it is not good that the man should be alone (Genesis 2:18). True wisdom reveals that two are better than one (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

In addition to the comfort we receive through studying the Scriptures (Romans 15:4), prayer (Philippians 4:6-7), and the hope of eternal life (I Thessalonians 4:13-18); God has provided us with brethren for comfort (I Thessalonians 5:11). When the world around us is in chaos our brethren should be a source of peace and edification for us (Romans 14:19).

These facts should set our minds toward the study we are about to engage in. With brethren being an important part of our blessings from God, we need to think hard about our relationships with our brethren. One of the identifying marks of a Christian is the love that he or she has for the brethren (John 13:34-35). That shows us that we need to be hard at work in developing, maintaining, and even protecting our relationships with one another. In fact, the Lord uses a fascinating word in describing how we are to love each other. That fascinating word is “fervent”. Let’s take a look at the verse that uses this term.

Fervent Love Among Yourselves

God’s instruction is this: *“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins”* (I Peter 4:8). This Scripture is not the only Scripture that draws out love as a superior factor in our lives (not that there needs to be another Scripture to add weight to the subject). Notice: *“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity... Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful”* (I Corinthians 13:13 and Colossians 3:13-15).

The second factor in I Peter 4:8 that we need to discuss is the word “fervent”. That English term is found in the following Scriptures: Acts 18:25, Romans 12:11, II Corinthians 7:7, Colossians 4:12, James 5:16, I Peter 1:22, II Peter 3:10, and II Peter 3:12 (King James Version). That being said, the Greek term that is used in I Peter 4:8 (ektenēs; Strong’s #1618) is used one time other than in I Peter 4:8. Notice that particular Scripture wherein I will bold and underline what Strong’s # 1618 is translated as: *“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made **without ceasing** of the church*

unto God for him" (Acts 12:5). What do you think "fervent", as it is used in I Peter 4:8, means? According to Strong's Dictionary that term means: "without ceasing". We know that the dictionary is spot on because of the translation of that word in Acts 12:5.

When brethren love each other unceasingly, sin will not abound. When you love your brethren you will hide a multitude of sins by helping that brother or sister in Christ repent and turn back to God (James 5:19-20). Unceasing love includes rebuking one another when such is needful (Proverbs 3:11-12, Proverbs 27:5-6, and Revelation 3:19).

After the brief things we have studied already, we should see that God wants us to put our love for one another above all things. Jesus put his spiritual brethren above his own physical family (Matthew 12:46-50 and Mark 3:31-35). Additionally, that love needs to be without ceasing. Scripturally speaking, the only person that we ought to love more than our brethren is our Lord (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37). Yet, you cannot have one without the other. That is, you cannot love God and not love your brethren.

If You Don't Love Your Brethren You Don't Love God

The command to love one another is repeated throughout the New Testament (John 15:17, Romans 12:10, Romans 13:8, Ephesians 4:1-2, Colossians 1:3-4, I Thessalonians 4:9-10, Hebrews 13:1, I Peter 1:22, I Peter 3:8, I John 3:23, and II John 5). One cannot rightfully read one command of God, not do it, and then proclaim that they love God (John 14:15, John 14:21-24, John 15:10, I John 2:3-6, and I John 5:2-3). We can clearly see that we are to love our brethren according to the will of God. That love is to be unending and above other earthly relationships. We are disobeying our Lord when we fail to do so. Therefore, if you are not in a proper relationship with the brethren, you have to ask yourself how much you really love the Lord.

Notice the following Scriptures that teach us we cannot love God if we do not love our brethren: *"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. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth... Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us... 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? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also"* (I John 3:14-18, I John 4:11-12, and I John 4:20-21).

Conclusion

Let's conclude with words from our Savior: *"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"* (John 15:12-14).