



Love of the Brethren

The church has a job to do. It is to go into all the world and get the gospel preached to all creation. It is to seek and to save the lost. It is to engage in spiritual warfare with the forces of darkness, and — as a mighty resurrected army — to win that warfare. But that is not going to happen if the brethren are in disarray, hateful and hating one another. To further His purpose, God has gone to a lot of work to create the proper atmosphere inside the local congregation, to have the Spirit of Christ pervade everything the church does. Each saint is repeatedly and in various ways exhorted to put aside petty selfishness and work together with the brethren in harmony and for the accomplishment of God's goals.

- **Love of the brethren** — When the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Colossae, he instructed them to “put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:14). Real love, of course, is self-sacrificing and willing to put the desires of God and needs of others ahead of itself. In this area, the apostle commended the congregation in Thessalonica, noting, “Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you” (1 Thessalonians 4:9). There was no need, but the apostle and the Holy Spirit are going to mention it any how! “For you yourselves are taught by God to love one another,” is the objective statement, to which he adds, “for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia” (1 Thessalonians 4:9,10). Yes, God indeed teaches His children of faith how to love, if they will pay attention to the instruction and example. “God is love,” is certainly a beginning point, and Christ demonstrated the love of God to a lost race by His willingness to hang on the tree. The chosen ones of Thessalonica had weathered the storms of persecution, and in consequence had really come to love and appreciate other brethren whose faith had carried them through. And not only in Thessalonica was this love exhibited, but also toward all the brethren in the whole province of Macedonia. This in itself is awesome, but Paul's record of that love for regional brethren shows how much interaction the different congregations had in the first century, and that too serves as an example for brethren of today. Paul, as would be expected, is not going to let those saints plateau out; “But we urge you, brethren,” he exhorts, “to excel still more!”

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- **Right kind of ambition** — The scripture warns against “selfish ambition” (James 3:14). Selfish ambition is destructive to the purposes of Christ, and always results in “disorder and every evil thing” (James 3:16). But there is good unselfish ambition, as Paul brings forward. “Make it your ambition,” he asseverates, “to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Disciples who learn to live quiet lives — lives without all the uproar and chaos and noise and clamor — are the ones who are productive; the others are so “crisis driven” that they never get anything of real value done. People who are “busy bodies,” who always have their noses in everyone else's business, are using other saints' lives as means of ducking the responsibility of managing their own. Finally, the brethren are to be working “with their own hands,” being productive and not wasteful of time or resources.

Living the Christian life is living a life of common sense, with a perspective of doing things that please God. A quiet life, minding your own business, and hard work are common sense principles for the upbuilding of society and making any community function. Even if the world as a whole goes the opposite direction, the Father in heaven still wants His children to live by those values, taking care of themselves, with instructions that “you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need” (1 Thessalonians 4:12). Carry on!!