

LOVE AS BRETHREN (1 Peter 3:8) (I)

Sermon to the saints at Westboro Baptist Church, November 5, 2017

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 1 Peter 3:8-9.

I'm thankful to God today for every one of you because God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has similarly shined in your hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face (or, image) of Jesus Christ. (2 *Corinthians 4:6*) I am privileged to give a word of exhortation today (*Acts 13:15*), to wit: "Love as brethren." These three words are shorthand for my message of the duty of members of Westboro Baptist Church one toward another. (The Lord willing I will deliver one-half of my sermon today and one-half next week.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, during his sojourn on earth, described it like this: "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*" (*John 13:34*)

Our beloved brother Paul (2 *Peter 3:15*) put it like this: "*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*" *Romans 12:10*. "*Let brotherly love continue.*" *Hebrews 13:1*.

That disciple whom Jesus loved (*John 21:20*) described it as: "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*" *1 John 3:14*.

Strong's Concordance, and others that have labored in the Bible through the years, say that the Greek word here translated "Love as brethren", is

“Philadelphia;” and is only used this one time in the Bible. The definition is, love to the brethren.

We are a called out assembly of believers (**Matthew 18:16**) united together and being of one mind concerning the faith, sympathizing in the joy and sorrow of one another, for the specific purpose to magnify and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ by following that commission in **Matthew 28:19-20**, to “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,*” by the power of, “*and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*” In this “called out assembly,” or ekklesia, or church (“*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (**1 Timothy 3:15**)), we have various duties as members for which we are obliged to each other, both for our own comfort (**1 Thessalonians 5:11**), honor (Christ working in us, the hope of glory (**Colossians 1:27**), and as his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works (**Ephesians 2:10**)), and edification of the saints (**Romans 14:19**), and for the glory of God (**Philippians 2:11**), it is necessary to recognize the manifestations of that “love as brethren.” In other words, what does this “love as brethren” look like, so that we may emulate those good things in word and deed? (This is the good kind of emulation, children. Not that warned against by our beloved brother Paul in **Galatians 5:20**.)

We must keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

In order to “*owe no man anything, but to love one another*” (**Romans 13:8**), we are obligated, as much as in us lies, to endeavor to “*keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;*” in support of which the apostle uses these arguments: “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one*

baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Ephesians 4:3-6) When the Holy Spirit puts together the argument in favor of this “unity of the spirit” who are you to entertain the notion of framing opposing argument or quibbling?

Care should be taken to promote and preserve unity of affection:

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 2:1-5)

There should be, as much as may be, unity of mind and judgment in the doctrines of the gospel: “*Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing*” (Philippians 3:16); and, “*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 among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*” (1 Corinthians 1:10) Or otherwise there is the danger of schism, divisions, and contentions. See the next verse: “*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.*” (1 Corinthians 1:11)

This "unity of faith" is based upon the fact that there is but one faith, **Ephesians 4:5,13**, one doctrine of faith, or scheme and system of divine truths to be believed; and church members should "*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel,*" **Philippians 1:27**; and "*hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of*

me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus,” 2 Timothy 1:13. Standing and holding “fast” implies exerting and focusing serious and sober attention and energy for the task. It also implies a force that takes away any inclination or capacity to let them slip. “*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*” (Romans 6:17) Think aircraft manufacturing plants (pictorial illustration following).



When you fly to one of our out-of-town public preaching events, you should spend a moment thinking of the structure in which you are flying. Hundreds of pieces have been formed to make up the larger form of that aircraft. Each one of those pieces was formed with specifications that cannot be altered or changed in any way. Otherwise they will not fit into the larger airplane. Those airplanes therefore have a specific form, and any alteration or change in any way of the form will result in disaster in the air. If mundane things as flight in the skies immediately above us necessitate a sound form to keep us from crashing and burning, how much more the everlasting gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which saves our eternal soul so that we may fly away to the heaven of heavens. God has not framed up *many* forms of sound doctrines. No. He has a “*form of*

sound doctrine.” (Romans 6:17). Acts 13:48: “*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*” Their belief is in that form of sound doctrine or they’re not ordained, they don’t believe, and they inherit eternal death.

There should be a zealous concern for unity of worship, and that nothing be introduced into it contrary to the pattern showed and directed to in the word of God; and that they “*serve the Lord with one consent,*” and “*with one mind, and with one mouth glorify God*” (Zephaniah 3:9 and Romans 15:6). We should equally concern ourselves to prevent discord in affection, judgment, and worship, and to secure peace. All strife should be avoided, and even checked at the beginning of it; the advice of the wise man is good in Proverbs 17:14: “*The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.*” Equally good is the advice of the apostle, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves,*” Philippians 2:3. Proud and contentious men, who seek to promote strife and division, are not to be encouraged in Christian communities. One of Fred Jr.’s favorite verses support this proposition in 1 Corinthians 11:16. “*But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*” We simply have no custom, because there is a zero tolerance policy. Because, “*only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.*” (Proverbs 13:10). (Pride is deadly; and if you want a fuller amplification of the details from the Bible on the subject of Pride, do the research; or in lieu thereof I advise visiting our web page, which includes my prior sermon on the subject, and following @WBCSaysRepent on Twitter wherein you will read daily reminders of the danger of Pride.)The peace of a church is to be labored after by its members, and by all means to be

pursued; the comfort of saints in fellowship with each other is a strong argument for peace and unity, (**Philippians 2:1,2**), and above all, as saints we would be desirous of having the peace of God with us, so we would be concerned to "*be of one mind, and live in peace*"; and then may we expect, and not otherwise, that promise in **2 Corinthians 13:11**: "*Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*"

We must have compassion (or sympathize in the joy and sorrow) one for another.

In order to prove out the Love we have for one another as brethren, to show how we are kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another (**Romans 12:10**); it is our happy duty to sympathize with each other in all conditions and circumstances we come into, pursuant to that lovely admonition in **Romans 12:15**: "*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*" We are the body of Christ, and members in particular (**1 Corinthians 12:27**) and so we are naturally sympathetic towards each other: "*And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*" (**1 Corinthians 12:26**). Friends, this sympathy should be with respect to things outward and temporal; any calamity, affliction, and distress, of whatsoever kind. They "*that are in bonds,*" especially for the sake of religion, should be remembered as "*bound with them,*" (**Hebrews 13:3(a)**) as if in the same circumstances, and should pity and relieve them as much as may be; and "*them which suffer adversity*" in body, family, or estate, "*as being yourselves also in the body,*" and liable to the same adversities, (**Hebrews 13:3(b)**), and therefore should visit, comfort, and assist them. If Job's three friends, when they heard of his afflictions in his person, family, and substance, though they lived at a distance from him, by appointment met together,

"to come, to mourn with him, and to comfort him" (Job 2:11); how much more should we? Likewise when in inward trouble and distress of soul, through the hidings of God's face (Psalm 13:1), the temptations of Satan (1 Peter 1:6), the weakness of grace (1 Corinthians 2:3), and the strength of corruptions (Romans 8:21); it becomes fellow members to **"comfort the feeble minded, support the weak,"** and **"bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."** (1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 6:2). This is the law of love and sympathy; this is the sympathy of God with his people in their afflictions, and also of Christ, who is **"touched with the feeling of [the] infirmities"** of his people, and should direct us to be of the same mind and practice. *"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."* (Isaiah 63:9). *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* Hebrews 4:15-16. Until this sermon I did not connect those two verses in this context. This frustrated me when I thought upon it; but the promise is: *"And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children."* (Isaiah 54:13). We must rely on His wisdom, His power, and His time line. And, we must *"rejoice evermore."* 1 Thessalonians 5:16.

It is our happy duty as church members to communicate to each other in such circumstances.

This is the great law of Christ, as King in his church, his royal commandment, which he enjoins on all his subjects, and frequently repeats. *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."* (John

13:34) “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” (John 15:12) “These things I command you, that ye love one another.” (John 15:17) “A threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:12. Indeed, never. Jeremiah 31:3: “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

It is our blessed privilege to communicate to our brethren in outward things which they need.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service ... Distributing to the necessity of saints,” Romans 12:1,13. Again, context makes an extra powerful appearance to inform us of what we should do and why. **“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10** Thank God that as I deliver this sermon I am looking at a group of people who live this rule; but let’s do more and more. Because our beloved brother Paul reminded us at a most notable time and in a most notable way at **Acts 20:35: “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”** Every time there is a reference like **“remember the words of the Lord Jesus,”** I immediately want to know where, what, when, why, how, and who. You should too. So, I searched and found at least these following verses:

Luke 6:30: “Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.”

Luke 6:35: “But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall

be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.”

Luke 6:38: *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”*

Luke 14:13-14: *“But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”*

Matthew 25:34-35: *“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.”*

In the times of the apostles, the churches had orders to make collections on the first day of the week for the poor saints, that thereby they might be relieved who were in necessitous circumstances.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

Brotherly love demands such conduct by each of us here towards our brethren in distress, for, *“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. And hereby we*

know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” (1 John 3:17-19). To communicate to our brethren is well pleasing in the sight of God, and will be taken notice of in the great day of account. See **Hebrews 13:16: “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”** And, see **Matthew 25:40: “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”**

Thank you for suffering this word of exhortation (Hebrews 13:22), as far as it has gone. Next week I hope to further warn with words about: our wonderful duty to communicate to each other in spiritual things; the blessed privilege to watch for each other’s souls; the happy opportunity to bear with one another; the charge to boldly approach the throne of grace to pray for one another; how we should be quick to not be joined to the world in their sin; to shun the practice of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; the terrible danger of being respecters of persons in our assembly; that it behooves us to strive together for the faith of the gospel; that it becomes us to be examples to each other in holy walk and conversation; and that all of these important qualities of our ekklesia fit squarely under God’s commandment to “Love as brethren!”

I love you. Amen.