

The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

Dec. 16, 2007 (Vol. 7)

“The Brotherhood”

borrowed

“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. (1 Peter 2:17)

The word “brotherhood” here is translated from *adelphotes*. It appears only twice in the New Testament, both times in First Peter (2:17; 5:9). The King James renders it “brethren” in 5:9, but the New King James renders it “brotherhood” in both verses. Of *adelphotes* Vine says, “primarily, ‘a brotherly relationship,’ and so, the community possessed of this relationship, ‘a brotherhood,’ 1 Pet. 2:17 (see 5:9 marg.)” and Thayer says, “*brotherhood*”; the abstract for the concrete, *a band of brothers* i.e. of Christians, *Christian brethren* : 1 Pet. ii. 17; v.9).

It is clear that Peter uses the term to refer to what Vine calls “the community possessed of this relationship” throughout the world. In 5:9 he compares the sufferings of those immediately addressed in his epistle to that experienced by their “brotherhood in the world (nkj).” In 2:17, it seems to be a contrast to “all men.” Hence, when we as children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ speak of “the brotherhood” we are speaking of ourselves along with all in the world that share in this great relationship. What a great throng of people! It is this throng that Peter especially tells us to love.

It seems to me that in recent years we have lost much of that keen sense of brotherhood that we once enjoyed. Those of us who consider ourselves “conservative” and “non-institutional” have done a pretty good job of teaching that each local congregation is autonomous and independent of any other congregation in the world. We have

shown that a failure to recognize this fundamental Bible principle has historically led to most of the wholesale apostasies of the past. We have rightly pointed out that the congregation of which we are members can exist and scripturally function as if there were no others like it in the world. We have also emphasized that each member of a congregation has a relationship and responsibility to the local church collectively and distributively that he does not have toward brethren elsewhere.

I fear that during all of this we may have developed a mentality that is a bit too “independent.” As a result of this perverted sense of independence, brethren have almost isolated themselves from any real concern, contact or sense of fellowship with their brethren elsewhere – even other brethren meeting across town.

An invitation can come (in some cases no invitation is sent) from faithful brethren elsewhere to their gospel meeting. It may or may not be announced at the receiving congregation, but it is generally ignored because it not a function of “our” congregation. In some areas preachers of local congregations have little contact or interaction with preachers or other members of other congregations.

This writer confesses his own guilt to a degree at times along these lines. We can remember a time when a church, in an area where there were several congregations would have a gospel meeting that the house would be filled mostly with members from the other congregations. Often, we would travel miles to encourage another congregation in its gospel meetings. We were just as interested in seeing another congregation prosper in the Lord as we were to see the congregation where we attended. We showed an interest in and often inquired about how that brethren meeting at such and such place were doing. That was before we conceived that “autonomous” and “independent” meant “isolation.”

Have we forgotten how to heed Peter’s admonition to “love the brotherhood?” The brotherhood, of which Peter wrote, is not a brotherhood of churches organized together as a unit nor is it a brotherhood of Christians organized into a unit. It is a *relationship* that exists between all Christians. They share a common faith and have common interests. While

New Testament congregations were not tied together organizationally speaking, they were tied together doctrinally because they subscribed to the same standard. Paul declared that what he taught and ordained in one church he ordained in all (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17).

They shared in a common faith. I do not have the right to meddle in the internal affairs of another congregation nor infringe upon its autonomy. It can decide, without any interference from me, its meeting times, when it will have a gospel meeting, how it can best use its treasury, who will do its teaching and preaching, lead its singing and praying, what kind of facilities it will provide to do its work, which of its members it may or may not discipline, etc.

But, because of my duty to “love the brotherhood,” I have an obligation to “speak the truth in love” to my brethren everywhere I have the opportunity to do so, just as I have an obligation to preach the gospel to every creature in the world because I love their souls. It is not interference into the affairs of other congregations when I demonstrate my love of the brotherhood by teaching them the truth and warning them of departures from the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3) and even the Bible teaching that should govern them as they exercise their autonomy.

Let us love and appreciate those of the brotherhood that we meet and work with regularly in the local congregation, but let us also broaden our scope of interest and “love the brotherhood” as a whole – enough to “correct, rebuke and encourage” (2 Tim. 4:2 - NIV) as needed.

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

White family, Sawyer Sims, Jean Gambrell (back), Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard (In Nashville), Wesley Geer, Mag Bumbalough, Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet (NHC 230), Marilyn Poteet-Langford (foot), Betty England, Joe Smith, Thelma Klein, Nathan Hill, Ed Williams, Michelle Austin, Lydia Poe, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Carolyn Williams, Kenley Streeval, Matthew Taylor (leukemia), Joyce Simmons Wagner, Lorene Myers (Rece's Grandmother), David Price (David Price's father), Bill Frazier (cancer).

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Radio Program - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- Home Bible Study - Sat. Dec. 8 & 22
- Ladies Class - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month
- Business Meeting - Sun. Dec. 30
- GM - Ron Daly, April 2008.
- GM - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

[Http://frontiernet.net/~nscoc](http://frontiernet.net/~nscoc)
NSCOC@frontiernet.net

OBEY THE GOSPEL!!!

- Hear (Rom. 10:17)
- Believe (Mark 16:16)
- Repent (Acts 17:30-31)
- Confess (Rom. 10:9)
- Be Baptized (Acts 2:38)
- Live Faithfully (Rev. 2:10)

North Sparta church of Christ

359 North Spring St.
Sparta TN 38583
(931) 836-3321

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