

Love With Brotherly Affection

March 7, 2021

Scripture: Romans 12:9-13

Reading: Mark 12:28-34

I have chosen to take a break before beginning our journey through Hebrews because I felt God wanted me to address relationships. All relationships take effort to be successful; friends, family, marriage, church and relationship with Christ. God is clear about relationships and their importance. This morning I want to explore what God tells us about the relationship within His church. The fact is that God calls Christians to live in community, to live in His church. One cannot live as a Christian in the fullest sense that our God teaches if they are not part of a church and Christian community. To be honest, church is messy; we are all sinners and at times we hurt others intentionally or unintentionally. God does not say - try and forgive and try to live in peace, and try to consider others but the Scriptures are clear we are commanded to forgive and we are to live in peace and serve others. I know this is easier said than done. So, this morning I will attempt to address the problem of unforgiveness towards others and frustration with others within the community of God. I have chosen to do this because God does not say as Christians it is preferable to be active in living in the church but He says we are to be in His church living with other believers in peace, unity and with affection - even though it can be a challenge. May this message convict all of us and prompt us to value each other more dearly.

The Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans the marks of a true believer. Paul inspired by God did not say these were suggestions, but this is the command of our God; we are to submit, obey and do this with a grateful heart. Reading from Romans chapter 12, **“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in**

hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” (v. 9-13) This is the Word and heart of God!

Amen!

Let us prepare to hear God this morning by going to prayer.

Living Out Affection

We have spoken often about loving our neighbor as we love ourselves – we are not to be self-seeking, but we are to be self-giving. The passage of scripture that we desire to be the mark of Canyon Bible Church is Mark 12:30-31, which is also found in Matthew 22:27-40 and Mark 12:20-31. “**“you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’** ³¹ **The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”** The fact that this command is repeated 3 times in the New Testament says it is important to God and therefore should be important to us. It should be our desire to protect and serve others, and see ourselves in them in order to appreciate each person and consider others more worthy. We have seen in God’s Word that as Christians we are to love our enemies, pray for our persecutors, bless those who curse us, return good for evil; this is the calling of God for all Christians. It is a challenge to live up to and this is why we desperately need the Holy Spirit and must understand we have to submit to the Holy Spirit to grow spiritual to the point we can have agape love for others.

Today we explore the relational experience that God intends for His people. He intends for us not merely to *do to others* as we would have them do to us, but he wants us to *feel toward other believers* a certain way. It is true that love is more than feelings. It is true that there are good ways we should treat each other even when we are feeling upset with one another. But it is **not** true to say that God is content with our treating each other decently while feeling hard towards each other.

Examining Romans 12, verses 9 and 10 it shows us God's heart for His church. ⁹“Let love be genuine. Genuine love comes from within, powered by the Holy Spirit and is unconditional. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ **Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.**” I want us to focus in on and think about is verse 10, “**Love one another with brotherly affection.**” The word affection in the Greek is *philadelphia* (fil·ad·el·fee·ah) where the city gets its name. The word love here needs to be defined; it refers to a special kind of love. We know “*phileo*” is the love of a friend, but here is this verse Paul uses a derivative that is used only here in all of the New Testament, the word is “*philostorgos*” (fil·os·tor·gos). Even though this word is used only once in the New Testament, outside the New Testament, this word is not rare, it is found in many ancient writings – it means tender affection especially towards a family member. The affections parents have towards their children and children towards their parents – it means family love.

In C.S. Lewis' book, *The Four Loves*, he says there are four basic kinds of love. He gives them their Greek names: *agape* - the God-like self-giving love even toward one's enemies; *phileo* - the love of friendship and camaraderie; *eros* - the love of romance and desire and sexual attraction; and *storge* - the love of affection that arises through natural attachment, a child, a dog, a favorite old shabby sweater, a spot in the woods. The word in Romans 12, verse 10 is a variation of the last definition Lewis uses for the word *storge*. But instead of affection for an object, it is tender affection, especially toward precious family members. This is what I want to focus on today.

The command for believers to love each other in the New Testament - the command for how we are to relate to each other in the body of Christ - is not merely that we bless those who curse or that we return good for evil or that we pray for those

who treat us badly or that we *do unto others* as we want them to *do* to us. There is more to this command. **We are to feel an affection**, a tender affection for each other.

As we begin to think of the implications of what God is commanding His children to be and do, let me take us to several other Bible texts which point in the same direction. The first is found in Peter's first letter, "**Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart**" (1:22) Here we are instructed to do much more than treat each other well. When God saves us, He gives us a new heart that is capable of loving in a way the world does not. God empowers us with this ability to love with affection as we read in verse 23, "**since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.**" (1:22-23) God empowers us with His spirit and His Word. Here again is something much more than treating each other well. Here is something from the heart. Something earnest, something with fervor. Something of family affection. The Spirit and Word of God enables us to love with affection.

Paul also addresses this in both his letters to the Philippians and Corinthians. First, in Philippians chapter 1, Paul says to the church, ⁸ "**For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.**" The Greek word for "affection" is "inner organs" so, the affection comes from deep within one. The idea is, and what Paul is saying is, I long for you and love you not just with an act of will power but with deep and tender affections - I ache for you, I miss you and I am homesick for you. Then second scripture, is in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6, Paul calls for the church to share this kind of love, saying, ¹¹ "**We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open.** ¹² **You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.** ¹³ **In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.**" Paul's command, which is God's command, is there is to be love among believers, we are to open our hearts wide towards each

other. Paul says here they have “restricted their affections” towards each other and this is wrong. Children of God living in community re to open their hearts to each other.

Another teaching in the New Testament concerning the affections brothers and sisters in Christian are to openly display towards each other is repeated 5 times. In **1 Peter 5:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12** and **Romans 16:16**, in all these passages believers are instructed to greet each other with a holy kiss or kiss of love. This is repeated 5 times in the New Testament meaning it is important, so, let me ask, does greeting each other with a handshake or hug communicate what Christ wants his children to communicate to each other? Does it show the depth of love and affection Christ says we are to have for one another?

So, I conclude that it is the will of God for his children not just to do good things for each other, and not just to pray for each other and to speak decently of each other - these are crucial and demand the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish. But God’s will for us is more; “[Love each other with brotherly affection](#)” and for “[our hearts](#) to be [wide open](#)”. God wants His church to behave as family and for His children to feel for each other a kind of tender affection and longing that would naturally be expressed in a holy kiss of love. So, today, in our present time, how do we express brotherly affection for each other?

Being Wary

Now, let me pause and bring to your mind the need to wary of being controlled by a popular theology at this point. There is a popular way of looking at God and our own wills and emotions that says; God will not command of us to do and be what we do not have immediate power to perform. And since we cannot by an act of will start feeling affection for someone, God would not require this of us. It is amazing how many people are consciously and unconsciously controlled by that view. This

distorted view enables us to read a command like, “[Love each other with brotherly affection](#)” and, without even thinking, we excuse ourselves on the basis of the fact that we cannot at this moment produce by an act of will such tender affection. Therefore, we conclude it cannot be a real command and we are not guilty if we do not have the affection because we are not really responsible for the spontaneous affections and emotions of our hearts. Do you see the danger of this rationalized thought process? The real question we must ask ourselves is, do we believe God’s Word and are we committed to submit ourselves to the Word of God? If the answer is yes, then we must change. We must make effort to change and God will honor our efforts.

Obeying God’s Command

My beloved, this process of thinking that allows people to set aside portions of God’s Word happens so fast, that it is scarcely noticed by our conscience mind and we just read right along and miss what God is truly saying to us. I urge you to stop right now and reconsider. Very seriously, reconsider. This is a deeply defective way of seeing God and of understanding your own emotions. The truth is that God does have a right to command that we feel anything He says we ought to feel and we are to obey. We ought to feel joy in the Lord, He commands, “[Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.](#)” (Philippians 4:4) When God calls us to feel the sorrow of sympathy for others, He commands, “[weep with those who weep.](#)”¹⁶ [Live in harmony with one another.](#)” (Romans 12:15-16) When it is right to feel gratitude for His great gift of salvation and church, He commands, “[let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.](#)” (Colossians 3:15) God says there is a time for remorse for our sin, He commands, “[Be wretched and mourn and weep.](#)” (James 4:9) God says it is right to fear the consequence of sin, Jesus commands, “[I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has](#)

authority to cast into hell.” (Luke 12:5) So, what we see is it is right for God to command us to respond properly even if we do not feel we can or want to.

The fact that our hearts are so distorted by sin that we do not feel what we ought to feel does not mean that God cannot command what is right and good and fitting for us to feel. We, you and me, are responsible to feel what God commands us to feel. So, my beloved, I plead with you, be more serious when you read these commands. Do not skim over them and without thinking allow your mind to discount what God says. Brothers and sisters, God has the right to tell you what you should feel towards Him and others. You are accountable for your emotions!

At this point you might be asking, why is this important? God’s ability to tell us how we are to feel is important because expressing brotherly or family affection for each other witnesses to the truth that God is our Father and we are His children and we are family. The problems many churches experience and one I pray by the power of God the Holy Spirit we avoid for Canyon Bible, is the church is NOT a human organization – it is the family of God. To be Christians means we are born a second time into the family of God. We are born the first time into a biological human family, but it is important to fully recognize our second birth is into the family of God. God commands we have genuine affection for each other.

My beloved, I am using human words to express godly principals. So, my words may be lacking but God’s are not. God’s words are reality and God takes very seriously the truth that all His children are to be brothers and sisters in His family. We all have One Father and we are all journeying to the same homeland. As His children God says, there is a way that His children should feel about each other. Not just outwardly acts towards each other - but He commands us to make a decision to feel affection towards each other. Our affections towards each other are to be tender and loving even when correcting each other. Why is this so important? Because this

testifies to the reality of the family of God and is an incredible witness to the world. To be clear, to feel hard towards each other contradicts who God is and who we are as His children. We no longer belong to the world - God is our Father; we are His children and as brothers and sisters of God's family we have the deepest common values in the universe and are to love each with tender affection.

So, the issue of how we feel towards each other is very important. The issue is whether we will live the truth of God's Fatherhood or not. Will our affections tell the truth about God and what He has done for us to atone for our sins in Jesus and give us new birth and faith and adopt us into His eternal family as brothers and sisters of Christ? This is not a small issue. It is an issue about the truth of Christianity. Will we live the truth the way God calls us to? Will we love one another with tender family affection? This raises the question, what do we do with our feelings when they do not match what God calls us to?

What About My Feelings?

If it is so important to feel as God directs us to feel and yet at times it is so hard, at those times how shall we respond? Suppose you hear the command of Jesus this morning; love the brothers and sisters at Canyon Bible with tender affection. Open your heart wide to them. Feel a longing for them and joy in them. And suppose you can think of several people that you do not feel that way about. They have been judgmental towards you or gossiped about you or snubbed you or let you down. And you say, "I hear you Lord and I submit to the rightness of your command. But you see me through and through. I do not feel affection for that person. My battle is just trying not to hate. But I yield. You have right to call me to this. I embrace the goodness and the authority of your call. I want to obey." But I am weak, what am I to do? Let me say, I fully believe God hears our sincere pleas and will show us the way.

How? Let me give you several ways to change how you feel and develop affections towards someone.

Praying for Spiritual Power

First, pray earnestly that God, the Holy Spirit would move in power on your heart and work the miracle that neither you nor I can work on our own. We are talking about the ability to live supernaturally. Pray that God would change your heart toward His other children - that He would create new affections and awaken old ones.

Focusing on Spiritual Truth

Second, keep your eyes focused on the heavenly reality not the earthly frustration. We tend to focus almost exclusively on the ways we have been hurt or disappointed. This thinking will defeat us every time. There is a greater reality to think about and focus on, but you must make an effort. Focus on the reality of God's Fatherhood. When you think about a Christian that is hard to feel affection for, say, "God is their Father, also." When you see that person, think, "God is their Father." Then say, "God is my Father." Take to heart you have the same Father. Say to yourself, "Jesus is their Savior and my Savior. The same blood bought them as bought me. The same Holy Spirit indwells them as indwells me. The same love flows from God toward them that flows toward me. They are my brother or my sister - we are both the beloved of God. We will live forever in the same family. We will live forever together in joy and delight in the presence of our Father on the new earth." Tell yourself all of this over and over until your heart is filled with affection.

Preach to yourself these things, preach to yourself the powerful words of Jesus, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32) Taking to heart Jesus' words will free

you from many defective emotions. Do not keep feeding those defective emotions with mere earthly thoughts about how you were wronged and how you were let down. God knows that. God will take care of that. He will settle that account. Set your minds on the great realities that make you a Christian. God has great love and affection for you and you are to have deep affection for your brothers and sisters of God's family.

At the beginning of chapter 12 of Romans, Paul gave the key to how all these impossible commands are to be fulfilled and we need to understand this key and plant this key deep into our heart and mind. Reading at verse 1, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”**² Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**” We must be transformed by the renewal of our minds. You cannot love Christians with tender affections in your old way of thinking and feeling. There must be a transformation. How? Paul says, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God.”** My beloved, you must focus on the mercies of God. Focus on the realities of heaven and eternity. Stop being conformed to this age and thinking only the way the world thinks when they are hurt and disappointed. They only think about their hurt and how bad the other person is for hurting them. But you are to be transformed, not conformed to this earthly way of thinking. Set your mind on the great realities that make you a Christian. Set your mind on God. Say to yourself, “He is my Father and He is their Father and He is our Father, and we will be with our Father forever.” We cannot go on in animosity. For living with animosity is a lie against the power and love and mercies of God.

Growing in Affection

Third, keep in mind that Christian love is not an all or nothing love, but Christian love is a spiritually growing love. In Paul's 2nd letter to the Thessalonians, he commends Christians to work at this, **“your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.”** (2 Thessalonians 1:3) My beloved, love is a growing thing. So, you may have some of it and be a real Christian and not have enough of it. You may feel some affection toward a fellow believer, but also wrestle with other negative emotions. That does not mean you are not a Christian, or that God is not pleased with you. But it does mean that you have been touched by the Spirit of your Father and He is touching you again now and saying to you, “There is another step to take. There is another level of love to move on to. Move now. Let the word of my imperfect servant, Pastor Bill, move you, as I am moving him, to go on to more affection for more of your brothers and sisters. Do not give up because of a false all-or-nothing mentality that does not recognize the new things God has begun to work within you.”

Avoiding Fatalism

Fourth, do not be a relational fatalist. What I mean by that is the feeling that it is hopeless and you could never change. You may say, “I don't feel affection for anybody. Our family did not feel or show affection.” Well God did not say, “Do this, if your family did it” or “I want you to feel, what your family felt.” God knows your weakness and your woundedness. The angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that as a virgin she would get pregnant with the Son of God. She balked, like you may be balking now - but know God is able to birth in you affection for God's people, your brothers and sisters. The angel did not accept Mary's reluctance, but he said to her, **“Nothing will be impossible with God.”** (Luke 1:37) Do not be a fatalist. Do not deny the power of God in your life. Respond to God as Mary responded to Gabriel,

“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (v. 38)

By the power of God you can grow affection for those you do not feel affection for.

Conclusion

Consider in closing the analogy of marriage. Do you think that married couples always feel tender affection for each other? That they always feel tender and warm towards each other? They do not. Even though such affection is the ideal, it is not always present. But to strive for the ideal of deep affection is what God calls us to. Because He gives us the goal and ideal of godly affection in our marriage and the fact that it is not always there is one of the reasons, He makes marriage unbreakable and seals it with an oath, “For better or for worse, till death do us part.” This vow enables us to live in commitment to each other. When feelings of hopelessness invade our hearts and we think the love and affection is lost; we only have to submit and God will reawaken our affections and He will empower us can to overcome our hurts and remain true and He will bring new tender affections, He will revived affection in our hearts. I know that it can happen. It has happened.

That is not only true in marriage. It is true in the church. I call you to it. Let us pursue it together as a community of Christ and as a family of God. Let us pray and set our minds on the great reality of God’s Fatherhood over us all and grow into a family of believers that loves each other with tender affection. Amen!