

Brotherly Love

Hebrews 13:1-8, June 13, 2010

Trinity Sunday II

Beloved of the Lord.....Concerning brotherly love, consider Jonathan and David of the Old Testament. I Samuel 18 says, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Where in all the Bible do we find such a godly love, a brotherly love between brothers of the Spirit? Indeed is there anyone in our own life presently that we could say our soul is knit to? Yet Jesus said, "This is My commandment, That ye love one another, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU." Your soul through the great love Christ has declared for you, is to be knit together with the soul of each of your fellow Christians in the pew next to you or across from you, regardless of any sin or quarrel in the past. Do you love them as Christ has loved you? Here we all fall short of the glory of God, thus here we must think of another brother, our Heavenly Brother Jesus Christ. Through the cross we could say with all certainty, Jesus Christ our Heavenly Brother knit His heart to our own and "greater love hath no man than this." Today let us consider the true brotherly love Christ desires of His brothers.

Let brotherly love continue. These words are necessary for it is not in our nature to continue in brotherly love. When there are quarrels and strife, is it quite easy to stop loving a brother. This is why God often warns us in the Bible about hatred, anger, jealousy, and bearing a grudge. James 5:9 says, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door." Likewise." When we find in our heart ill-will toward a brother, jealousy, or a grudge, we take our first steps on the path of Cain who killed his own brother Abel. When we see that darkness of jealousy or anger within, we must repent and pray "deliver us from evil." Let us think of our Brother Jesus. Jesus is far better than any earthly brother in that He made all our evil as brothers His own upon the cross. On the cross Jesus was counted as a sinful brother, a bloody brother, a murderer a million times worse than Cain and He was punished accordingly. Whenever we want to be true brethren here below, we must always think of Jesus our eternal Brother above. The blood of our Heavenly Brother continually intercedes for us so that even though we daily transgress His commandments, through sincere repentance of sin and faith in Him we still have everlasting life. "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."

Therefore **Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**

As Abraham set a feast before Christ and the angels who appeared as men, so we are to welcome guest and visitors in our homes, even strangers. In the way we treat strangers, we treat Christ. On the Last Day Christ the King will say to those who believed in Him, "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.... Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me." To be rude to a person, unkind and uncaring, is to be rude, unkind and uncaring to Christ. Yet when we by faith are kind, caring, and compassionate to visitors, neighbor, and strangers, we are kind, caring and compassionate to Christ. I Peter 4 says, "above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. This doesn't mean we are to sympathize with those who are jailed for their crimes, but we are to remember those who suffer persecution for Christ's sake. In northern Nigeria the Muslims persecute Christians and forbid evangelism. In China due to godless communism, vocal Christians are beaten, jailed, or tortured. In the Middle East, the capture and beheading of Christians is rather common. Even in this country we heard of a teenage girl who after converting to Christianity fled to Florida. Her Muslim father had threatened to kill her. In one of the Scandinavian countries (Finland I believe), it is illegal to read Romans chapter one which condemns homosexuality. In England there are secret police who monitor conversations at restaurants or public gatherings, listening for "hate crimes". God thus instructs us to remember those in bonds. In prayer we ask God to deliver such from evil, to give them strength for their trial, also that God will overthrow the wicked in power. Belonging to the same Body of Christ we weep with them that weep but "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. It pleases our Lord in heaven when husbands and wives live peaceably and are faithful to one another. Long after the honeymoon is over, each ought to happily and regularly satisfy the desires of one another because "the bed is undefiled." In marriage the body of the husband belongs to the wife, and the body of the wife belongs to the husband and "ye are not your own." While marriage is primarily for the purpose of companionship and procreation, it is also a remedy for the sin of fornication. While the natural desire of one

sex for the other is not sinful in itself, it is sinful if that desire is fulfilled with anyone outside the bonds of holy wedlock. "It is better to marry than burn" in such lusts. Sadly our world is filled with illegitimate and unfortunate children whose unmarried parents yielded to carnal appetites, lying down in the bed of hell. But it is not fair when a boy or girl has to grow up without a father, because both mother and father at a certain moment only wanted one thing. Likewise there are men who commit the sin, only to find later the woman is pregnant, only to find later the woman had an abortion. Their sin haunts them for the rest of their life. "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" yet "marriage is honorable in all." Only Jesus can heal such wounds, and let us not forget Jesus Himself being holy, died and rose again that all fornicators and adulterers might be forgiven.

Hence we should always be content with our spouse, our house, our daily bread and "*It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.*" Ps. 127:2 If we live in a cardboard house with only one piece of bread to eat, it is enough, and "godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Gambling in its various forms is sinful in that we covet, we want, what we didn't work for. ***Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***

It is true, of course, when we endure trial and tribulation, sickness, hardship, loss, disease, tragedy, and the like, it feels as if God has forsaken us. At such times we rightly cry out in prayer, "Lord please, PLEASE have mercy on me and help me!" But that is the whole point of the exercise. God allows such for His believing children on earth, only so we will continue to repent and our thoughts continually ascend upward to our Heavenly Brother. Thus God explains in Isaiah 54, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer."

With such a Heavenly Brother as this we now can say **The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.** These words concern persecution, and the strength to confess Christ in the face of death. In the terrible days of Rome there was a famous preacher named Polycarp. The judge told him that if he didn't sacrifice to their gods, he would be devoured by wild beasts. Polycarp quietly answered, "Let them come!" When the judged threatened him with death by fire; he answered: "You threaten me with a fire which burns a short time and shall then go out; for you

know nothing about the first of the judgment and the coming eternal punishment which the godless shall receive continually. Yet, what delays you? Do as you please!" He was sentenced to the funeral pyre and remained true in the confession till death." (Gosswein) Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." If then they threaten you with death dear Christian, "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown." God will always be the strength you need to endure persecution to the end, for the Lord says, "I, *even I, am* he that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man *that* shall die, and of the son of man *which* shall be made *as* grass."

Finally, **Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.** It is the Holy Ghost through the divine call, who chooses and aligns each congregation with the very pastor they need. Throughout your life, whoever your pastor may be, as long as he teaches rightly look upon him as God's chosen instrument given to feed you the words of Jesus, the words of everlasting life. While there will always be at least some strife between pastors and layman due to the sinful flesh of each, the members of a congregation ought always follow their pastor in so far as the Word of God is concerned. Thus the "rule" of a pastor only extends as far as the Word. When he speaks to you God's Word, listen carefully to what he says, for God is speaking through him. Consider well the end of his conversation. Here I cannot but think of a pastor who went to visit a troubled marriage. The wife out of anger had momentarily left her husband but the husband had said cruel words. While the pastor said many things, it was the end of the conversation that struck the husband. With a stern voice the pastor warned, "if I were in your shoes, I would do everything necessary so she would return and come back home." It was his tone, and his words, the end of his conversation, which the man heard, heeded, and obeyed.

As we close today let us always remember, that though we have indeed been poor and evil brethren, the blood of Jesus our Heavenly Brother still pleads for us on high. Through the cross His heart is yet knit to our own soul, and "greater love hath no man than this." **Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.** Amen.