

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org June 6,2013

## Be Devoted To One Another With Brotherly-Love

by Dan Trygg

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly-love...”

Romans 12:10

“Having purified your souls in the obedience of the truth unto an unhypocritical brotherly-love, agapē-love one another earnestly from a pure heart...”

I Peter 1:22

“...applying all diligence, in your faith supply excellence; and in your excellence, experiential-knowledge; <sup>6</sup> and in your experiential-knowledge, self-control; and in your self-control, perseverance; and in your perseverance, good-devotedness; <sup>7</sup> and in your good-devotedness, brotherly-love; and in your brotherly-love, agapē-love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true-knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

II Peter 1:5-8

“Now concerning brotherly-love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to agapē-love one another...”

I Thessalonians 4:9

“Finally, y’all have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly-love, a tender heart, and be humble...”

I Peter 3:8

“Let brotherly-love continue.”

Hebrews 13:1

“Brotherly love”. We have probably heard that phrase since we were kids. **Philadelphia is called “the city of brotherly love”.** Did you ever wonder why? Is it because of William Penn, or the Quakers, who originally settled “Penn’s woods” or “Pennsylvania”, as it came to be called? Well there quite likely was a Quaker influence, but the real reason that Philadelphia is called “the city of brotherly love” is that is what the name means. **“Philadelphia” is the English spelling of the NT Greek word for “brotherly love”.** It is a combination of the word, “*philia*”, which means “tender affection, emotional warmth, or enjoyment of another’s company”, and the word, “*adelphos*”, which is the Greek word for “brother”. Hence, “*philadelphia*” means “tender affection for a brother or sister”. It originally was strictly used to designate the love and affection that close family members had for one another. By NT times, it came to be extended to having *that kind of* close sibling-affection toward people *outside* of your blood family. There was a different Greek word, *storgē*, that described a family or group loyalty. That word did not necessarily imply that you had a close affection for those other members, however. *Philadelphia* went beyond *storgē* to describe a warm-hearted tender affection toward those who are “brothers”. There is a relationship of delight and enjoyment in being together.

**It was not uncommon for the Jews to refer to one another in terms of “brother” or “sister”, to designate that they were from the same nation, heritage and spiritual family.** Not surprisingly, this manner of speaking is represented most clearly in the gospel of Matthew, where Jesus refers to His listeners as “brothers” some 18 times. Matthew was written for the Jewish community, and this was one more way in which Matthew was led to craft his record to appeal to the sensibilities of his Jewish audience. By contrast, Mark only records Jesus speaking in this manner on three occasions, Luke on seven occasions, and John only twice. In many of the speeches to unbelieving Jews recorded in the book of Acts, the apostles referred to them as “brothers” because of their common ethnic and spiritual background (e.g., 2:29,37; 3:17; 7:2; 13:26; 22:1; 23:1,5,6; 28:17). It was a respectful, inclusive way to appeal to them, minimizing differences and emphasizing their common interests. These were not “outsiders” or “gentiles” coming with some new, strange religion. These were fellow Jews, brothers, who were sharing with them the fulfillment of their common hope. The Messiah they all believed in had come.

**This cultural speech pattern of the Jewish community was naturally extended to the church, especially in the beginning, when everyone was both Jewish and believers in Jesus.** Once it was clear that *God* had indicated that converted Gentiles were acceptable to Him, and that they were to be included in the “family of God”, **it didn’t take long for people to begin to refer to one another as “brother” and “sister”, no matter what their ethnic and cultural background** may have been. That must have raised a few eyebrows among traditional Jews, but **it rapidly became the common way to refer to one another.** Thus we see Christians refer to one another as “brethren” some 30 times in the book of Acts, and over 175 times in the remainder of the NT!

**In Christ, we have a common bond that goes even deeper than physical family relations.** We are united by the blood of Christ, recreated as children of God, reborn by the one Spirit into a mystical union, so that we truly *are* members of one another. **Furthermore, all are in the image of God, and we are all being transformed to become like Him more and more.** There is plenty to appreciate about one another, if we have a mind to look for it. As we fellowship in the Holy Spirit, by walking with the Lord in honesty and integrity, we can experience a oneness that goes way beyond any other relationships this world has to offer (I Jn. 1:7). **Jesus had emphasized that following God was more important than family relationships. He called followers to be willing to put Him before all else.** It may mean leaving or losing precious relationships, one’s own life or possessions to follow Him (Lk. 14:26-33). He also

said, however, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.” What was He talking about? The church, the “called-out people of God”. He had to deal with this issue Himself. When His family came to see Him, because they thought He had gone off the deep end, He refused to go with them. He said, “Who are My mother and My brothers? And looking about at those who sat around Him, He said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For **whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother**’” (Mk. 3:33-35). Thus, we find that when the Lord commissioned Ananias to go pray over Saul of Tarsus, the dreaded persecutor of Christians who had been converted on the road to Damascus, the first words out of his mouth were, “*Brother Saul...*” He was now fully forgiven, made new, and was to be included as a family member, a brother in Christ.

**The passages at the top of the page include all the places that *philadelphia* occurs in the NT.** Romans 12:10 is interesting in the Greek. It is literally, “In brotherly-love, be *philostorgē*-ones unto one another.” With kind, tender affection as a sibling, we are to be affectionately-loyal-family-members toward one another. Paul packed a lot of nuances into these few words. The point he is making is that **we are not just to have that family-bond going on, but we are to treat each other with brotherly-affection so our family bond is enjoyable and delightful. It is much easier to be a family if we treat each other well, with value, kindness, affection and respect.** Again, the *storgē* can be a family bond that is loyal even when we don't necessarily get along, or enjoy each other's company. Paul is saying, “That's not good enough.” **He wants us to interact with warm, affectionate brotherly-love so that our family bond is tight, and enjoyable.** We can choose to *invest* in our communications and expressions toward each other in positive ways that can foster this kind of atmosphere. **We can't make people like us, but we can be likeable people.**

I Peter 1:22 says that **our hearts have been purified unto, or for the purpose of leading us into brotherly-love that is genuine or unhypocritical.** This is a natural by-product of a new heart. **Brotherly-love then becomes a platform for us to take the next step, which is to *agapē*-love one another.** Peter commands us to do so fervently.

The relationship between *philadelphia* and *agapē* comes up in the next passage listed above. In II Peter 1:3-7, the elderly apostle talks about how God has made available to us everything we need to live the Christian life. Having stated that, he then admonishes us to apply all diligence to grow up into that potential God is making available. There is a step-by-step process he outlines, moving from having a virtuous desire to grow, to gaining knowledge, then applying that knowledge, and persisting in that new change. From that developed self-control, then you apply yourself to “good-devotedness” or “reverence toward God”. (To translate it as “godliness” is misleading.) To that new level of application, add brotherly-love. Once you have somewhat mastered that, then you can add *agapē*-love. He sums up by saying that those who develop these qualities, and continue in them will become useful and fruitful in their relationship to Christ. How are we to understand this process Peter describes? It is not to be construed as levels of religious works. Rather, it describes a process of going deeper in God, learning to unite your heart with His. ***Agapē*-love is the end point of the process, because that can only be produced by the Spirit of God within us (I Jn. 4:7). *Philadelphia* is a recognizable step along the way, because it is also prompted by God's Spirit.** It is the by-product of the renewed heart, as we have seen. Although non-Christians can also experience and express brotherly-love toward other people, the heart of God freely reaches out in delight toward our brothers and sisters without pretense or hypocrisy, as we saw above. **When we are experiencing the *philadelphia* that comes from the Spirit, we are not far from the *agapē*.**

The I Thessalonians passage seems to confirm this. Paul said that **they had no need for anyone to tell them anything about *philadelphia* because God had taught them to *agapē* one another. If they had reached that level of union with God, then they would have no problem expressing the brotherly love toward each other, either.**

I Peter 3:8, was a summary for a section that began in 2:13. It was all about submitting for the Lord's sake to every human institution, ...citizens to governments, slaves to masters, wives to husbands, etc., ... , even if these institutions were unfair or unjust. We should not be surprised at persecution or suffering, for the Lord Himself experienced it, and left us an example to follow. We are to entrust ourselves to God in whatever situation we face. God will see us through. In summation, Peter calls us to continue in one mind, sympathetic, loving-the-brethren, tender-hearted and humble in mind. Don't get pulled into reacting to the evil, but remain in the Spirit. **Part of what can keep us sane in difficult times is the refreshment and joy of delighting in each other. We can be like a light in the darkness to each other, or like a cup of cold water in the desert, if we respond to the Spirit in one another.**

In Hebrews 13:1, the writer says, “**Let brotherly-love continue.**” The word for “continue” means to “remain, abide, last, persist, continue to exist.” **In other words, “stay in the brotherly-love zone”.** He goes on to give some examples where brotherly-love might motivate action. “Do not neglect showing hospitality to strangers, ...remember those who are in prison, ...and those who are suffering hardship, or are being mistreated. **If brotherly-love were to abide, then needy people will be cared for, and we also will be filled with the Spirit's joy.**”