

Brotherly Love Talks

by
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“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whosoever has the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in Him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:14-18).

YOU have heard the old adage, “Money talks!” It is true, is it not? Money carries unbelievable weight and it is a remarkable indicator. What we do with our money speaks of our *actual* values and convictions.

Money has no character of its own. It draws its vice or virtue from the hand that holds it. The hand that spends it reflects the morality of the soul.

But money is not alone. Many objects, events, and traits speak. First John 3:14-18 says brotherly love talks. The existence or nonexistence of brotherly love says much about our devotion to God. The contents and consecration of the heart cannot be concealed. What is down in the well of the heart will come up in the bucket of speech and conduct.

Look at your heart while John relates what brotherly love says about us.

I. OF OUR CONVERSION TO CHRIST

(1 John 3:14, 15)

Love for one another tells of our conversion to Christ. John writes, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren” (3:14).

Affection for brothers in Christ is created by love for Christ; it is the fruit, the result, of a Christ-controlled heart. Love is the proof of life; hatred is the proof of death. John further says, “He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (3:14, 15).

A Christ-centered heart is the only soil in which the flower of love can grow. One beautiful country near the equator cannot grow tomatoes. Its tomatoes are small and sickly even though the year-round temperature would seem to be ideal for tomato growing. The soil in this paradise-like place does not have the right components for tomatoes. The weather is right, the seed is right, but the soil is wrong! The heart is also soil. Brotherly love cannot flourish in a heart-soil that is not right with God. Love is a vital sign of spiritual life. It is as dependable as the vital signs of physical life. If a doctor concludes that the patient’s heart has stopped beating and cannot be revived, he pronounces the patient dead. He can be certain of his pronouncement because of the reliability of this sign of life. A loveless heart is positive evidence of a dead heart toward God.

Take a quick heart check. Have you really been converted to Jesus? We may question at times our growth, but we must be confident about our birth. Compare your conversion with the conversions recorded in Acts to make sure your conversion accords with the divine pattern. Genuine conversion precedes and produces real brotherly love.

II. OF OUR COMMITMENT TO THE

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

(1 John 3:16)

John also says that our love of the brethren speaks of our commitment to the example of

Christ. Jesus loved His disciples and laid down His life for them. He is the Christian's great example of how to love a brother.

John holds up this beautiful example and gives an unforgettable exhortation. Jesus' example of love culminates in the cross. John says, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; . . ." (3:16). Our Savior is the epitome of what real love is and does. John's exhortation is clear and demanding. He urges, ". . . and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (3:16).

A Christian is a miniature Christ in the world. He is not perfect, but he seeks to live as Jesus lived. In his spirit, purpose in living, humility of mind, and service, he strives to resemble Jesus.

A teacher was putting shoes on the little kindergarten school children at the end of the day. It was a big task—thirty-two children, sixty-four feet! She had come down to the thirty-second child and the sixty-third foot. With all the questions and confusion, patience was hard to find. After the sixty-third shoe had been laced, the timid child said, "Teacher, these are not my shoes!" The teacher froze, ready to throw in the towel for good. Then, in a quiet, grateful voice, the girl explained, "They are my sister's. She let me wear them today!"

What a lesson! Things are not always as they appear! But there is another lesson! Did you notice the spirit of the sister who loaned her shoes? What she did was brotherly love in action. Shoes are precious and personal. The sister's action symbolizes the Christ-like attitude of selflessness and sacrifice. Would you loan your shoes to your brother?

How far are we willing to go in following Jesus' example? Does your love of your brothers reflect your commitment to the example of Christ? Do not be guilty of asking, "Is there anything I can do?" Look for a need in your brother's life and go meet it. Do not wait for something good to happen; make something good happen! Brotherly love is observant and opportunistic.

III. OF OUR COMPASSION FOR OTHERS (1 John 3:17, 18)

Likewise, brotherly love tells of a compassionate heart. Compassion grows out of brotherly love. Therefore, compassion cannot exist where there is no brotherly love.

Compassion is the ability to feel our brother's need deeply enough to do something about it. It is more works than words (3:18). It results from the love of God abiding in the heart (3:17).

The compassionate Christian not only *sees* the need of another but *satisfies* it. John says, "But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (3:17). Christian compassion follows a definite route: ability, awareness, action. It is more what we do to help a brother than what we say. John says, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (3:18).

A little boy had been sent to the store for a dozen eggs. He had purchased the eggs and was on his return trip home. Accidentally, he fell and broke four of the eggs. In his mind, going home with four broken eggs was unthinkable! All he knew to do about his situation was to sit down beside the broken eggs and cry. A man came walking along. Seeing the boy's predicament, he expressed his sorrow and went on. Another man came walking by. Seeing his need, he paused, handed him a fifty-cent piece, and said, "Here, go buy four more eggs." The second man's actions told of his compassionate heart.

Are you a compassionate person? Look at your actions toward another's need! Look at your brotherly love! Does the love of God dwell in us so fully that when we see a brother in need we respond in tender compassion to his need? Brotherly love and compassion go together. Where there is no compassion, there is no brotherly love; where there is no brotherly love, there is no compassion.

CONCLUSION

Our love of each other reflects our devotion to God. It proclaims our conversion to Christ, our commitment to the example of Christ, and our compassion for others. The outward manifestations of love mirror the inner commitments of the soul.

Remember that dark day when Cain, with a loveless heart, murdered Abel? (Genesis 4:1-15). God said to Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10). Later, the Hebrew writer said of Abel, "Though he is dead, he still speaks" (Hebrews 11:4). Cain's lack of love has been talking for

thousands of years. Hatred has blackened the name of Cain forever. As long as the world stands, the blood of Abel will speak. It will proclaim the ugly message of hatred, murder, and death.

Our love for one another talks too. Perhaps our deeds will not speak as loudly as did Cain's, but they will eloquently speak. Jesus said, "By

this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Our love for each other declares the love of God. It is the world's initial taste of the heavenly world. Our love for each other declares our allegiance to Christ and our willingness to follow His example. Does your love speak eloquently to those around you?

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