

## LESSON 10

*Brotherly Kindness**“[add] to godliness brotherly kindness”*

Having noted the promises of God through which one may partake of the divine nature, Peter instructed, *“giving all diligence, add to your faith”* (2 Peter 1:5). We are to add the aim of virtue, to virtue the knowledge to achieve it, to knowledge the self-control to apply it, to self-control the perseverance to continue in it, and to perseverance the godliness which brings it all into a heavenward focus. The additions of these virtues represent a direction of life enjoined by Christ upon all His disciples. Engaged in this common effort through being drawn to Christ, the disciples are individually drawn to each other. As godliness manifests their affections are for things above, so now also they are to express their affection to those who are engaged in the same. Peter continues, *“[add] to godliness brotherly kindness”* (2 Peter 1:7).

## BROTHERLY KINDNESS (PHILADELPHIA) DEFINED

- “made up of *phileo*, ‘to have an affection for,’ and *adelphos*, ‘a brother.’” (WUEST)
- “fraternal affection” (STRONG)
- “love of brother/sister” (BDAG)
- “(1) love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love; (2) in the NT the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren” (THAYER)

Brotherly kindness is a natural affection common to our experiences. BDAG also comments, “elsewhere in the literal sense of love for blood brothers or sisters.” The bond and resulting affection which family has for one another is one of God’s blessings in life. Even witnessing it among others brings one warmth and comfort. The expectation of its presence among family is such that its absence raises a multitude of questions and concerns. Its appearance in spiritual contexts has an even loftier significance.

The brotherly kindness possessed by Christians transcends the ties of earthly tenure. “Blood is thicker than water,” but the blood of Christ brings those washed in it closer than anything else could. The command to add brotherly kindness challenges us to battle shortsightedness and set our affections on the spiritual and eternal as well as on those who have done the same. The relationship which spiritual brethren sustain in Christ does not end, and our mutual affection should be pursued, cherished, and nurtured.

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In considering brotherly kindness, it is also important to understand the distinction from *agapē* love. This lesson, followed by the next, will demonstrate the difference, but some comments at

this juncture are needed. The *agapē* love which follows in the list by Peter primarily considers the action taken in service of another's well-being. It does not require affection. Therefore, in many cases *philadelphia* is not present with *agapē* (cf. Matthew 5:43-48, love for enemies). However, where there is the commanded *philadelphia*, there is also the commanded *agapē*. *Philadelphia* highlights the affection brethren have for each other, and *agapē* the acts of service. Neither of these is dispensable. We cannot like our brethren but not love them. Nor can we love our brethren but not like them. Christians serve one another in love. They also have a warm affection for each other.

## THE NATURE OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS (PHILADELPHIA)

Brotherly kindness of a physical sort springs from a common physical birth. Affection between siblings comes naturally by sharing the same parents. Similarly, brotherly kindness of a spiritual sort springs from a common spiritual birth. Peter wrote, *"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren (philadelphia), love one another fervently with a pure heart"* (1 Peter 1:22).

Ultimately, the imperative verb of Peter's statement is that the brethren *"love (agapaō) one another."* This love is distinct from *philadelphia* (as noted before). However, the call to act in this way is predicated on their obedience to the truth and resultant brotherly kindness. They had purified their souls by obeying the truth revealed by the Spirit. This occurred in baptism, the new birth (cf. 1 Peter 1:3, 23; John 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:26). By their obedient faith expressed in baptism they became children with an inheritance (vv. 3-5), children who obeyed (vv. 13-16), and children who had a reverence for their Father (v. 17). As mutual children of God they had become spiritual *"brethren"* (v. 22), part of the *"brotherhood"* (5:9). They *"once were not a people but are now the people of God"* (2:10). As living stones, they were being built together as a spiritual house, and a holy priesthood (2:4-5). All these descriptions are collective nouns – children, house, priesthood, people of God, brotherhood. They speak of relationships and community. Such relationships yield affection.

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Peter's point is that their decision to obey the truth through the Spirit brought them into an affection for those who had done the same, their brethren. The preposition used to connect their obedience to their sincere *philadelphia* is *eis*. It means *"to or into"* (STRONG) (cf. Acts 2:38 – *"for (eis) the remission of sins"*). Their obedience of faith placed them into *"love of the brethren"* (*philadelphia*). The American Standard Version

reflects the Greek more accurately, *"your obedience to the truth unto (eis) unfeigned love of the brethren."* The common spiritual birth brought people who would have likely otherwise been distant into a warm affection for each other. There are powerful examples of this throughout scripture, like Philemon receiving his once unprofitable slave as a *"beloved brother"* (Philemon 11, 16), or the call to *"Let brotherly love (philadelphia) continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers"* (Hebrews 13:1-2). Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS (PHILADELPHIA)

1. **It is commanded by God.**

*Philadelphia* is found 8 times in the New Testament. 6 of the occurrences are in the form of a command or in reference to a command. The other 2 address the church in Asia. While brotherly kindness accompanies our

entrance into the Divine family, it no less requires effort to sustain it and cultivate it. Immediately after noting the affection for their brethren they came into, Peter commanded them to lay aside the sinful actions and feelings toward each other and grow together in Christ (cf. 1 Peter 2:1-5). Without stoking the fires of brotherly kindness our affections will wane, and problems will arise. Peter's affections for his new Gentile brethren failed when he played the hypocrite (cf. Galatians 2:11-13). The Galatians were warned about treating each other as enemies and consuming each other (cf. Galatians 5:13-15, 25-26). Paul had to address two sisters in Christ who were at odds with one another (cf. Philippians 4:2-3 – He does not mention a doctrinal or moral problem. Perhaps they were not showing proper affection and treatment.). When people from different families, backgrounds, races, genders, cultures, etc. come together in Christ they must look past their differences to their common faith in Christ to fan the flame of their brotherly affection.

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2. **It is vital to the unity and functionality of the body of Christ.** The body of Christ is composed of a diversity of people who would otherwise be disconnected (cf. Galatians 3:26-29; Acts 10:28; Ephesians 2:11, 14-18). Any body of people set to a common task who cannot stand each other will fail miserably, and cease being a unit. Brotherly kindness must continue for the church to maintain unity, and function effectively in the will of God. In a context concerned with the unity of the body, and collective effort to contribute everyone's share (cf. Romans 12:3-8), Paul urged his readers toward *philadelphia*. "*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love (philadelphia)*" (Romans 12:10). He doubled down on the importance with the first part, "*Be kindly affectionate*" (*philostorgos* – fond of natural relatives, i.e. fraternal towards fellow Christian (STRONG)). Such brotherly affection would allow for the brethren to care for and serve one another. They would rejoice and weep with one another as they were of the same mind (Romans 12:15-16).

## NURTURING BROTHERLY KINDNESS (PHILADELPHIA)

Brotherly kindness must be nurtured. The Bible speaks of some, who through neglect and spiritual defilement, have failed in affection for their own fleshly family ("*unloving*," Romans 1:31; *astorgos* – hard-hearted towards kindred, STRONG). If the fleshly affection requires effort, certainly the spiritual does. We cannot expect our affections for brethren to remain, much less

thrive and increase, if we are not diligently working toward that end. Paul told the Thessalonians, “But concerning brotherly love (*philadelphia*) you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10). How do we “increase more and more” in brotherly kindness?

- **Value the Spiritual Over the Physical:** Paul told Titus, “Greet those who love (*phileō; affection*) us in the faith” (Titus 3:15). Such brotherly affection comes from the mutual relation to the standard of faith. Peter spoke of “*like precious faith*” (2 Peter 1:1). When we value the spiritual, then we will have an affection for our spiritual brethren. We must seek the kingdom (including its citizens) first (cf. Matthew 6:33). If we do this, brotherly kindness will increase.
- **Associate with the Brethren:** We cannot expect to have an affection for those we do not spend time with. When the church was first established, people from all over continued daily with one other in spiritual matters, as well as social (cf. Acts 2:42-47). Paul was with the Jerusalem brethren “*coming in and going out*” (Acts 9:28). We are considerate of others as we assemble with the saints (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25). If we are with the brethren, we will grow in our love for the brethren.
- **Pray for the Brethren:** Prayer fixes our mind on God, but also on the subject matter of our prayer. Paul encouraged brethren to pray for each other (cf. Ephesians 6:18). He was constant in prayers for the brethren (cf. Ephesians 1:16; Philemon 4; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; Colossians 1:3; etc.). When we pray for each other without ceasing (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17), our cares, concerns, hopes, and joys will be shared.

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LESSON 10 QUESTIONS

1. What connection does *“brotherly kindness”* have with the preceding *“godliness?”*
2. Define *“brotherly kindness.”*
3. How does *philadelphia* differ from *agapē* (*“love”*)?
4. What leads to the Christian’s *“brotherly kindness”* toward other Christians? (cf. 1 Peter 1:22)
5. Why is *“brotherly kindness”* important?
6. What did Peter command the brethren to lay aside after discussing their affection for each other? (cf. 1 Peter 2:1-3)
7. Explain why *“brotherly kindness”* is so vital to the unity and functionality of the local church.
8. What are some ways we can *“increase more and more”* (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10) in *“brotherly kindness?”*

