

# Really Love One Another

*One Another Duties*

By Pastor George McDearmon

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**Bible Text:** 1 Peter 1:22; John 13:34-35  
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## **Ballston Lake Baptist Church**

1 Edward Street  
Ballston Lake, NY 12019

**Website:** [blbc.org](http://blbc.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/blbcsa](http://www.sermonaudio.com/blbcsa)

Well, brethren, as we begin this morning making our return to "love one another," I am conscripting an account entitled "Beautiful Hands," from William Bennett's "The Moral Compass," and account that I used sometime in the past but I trust it will be a suitable introduction as we make our way back into this matter of loving one another.

The account, "Beautiful Hands," goes this way.

Some young girls were talking by the brook, boasting of their beautiful hands. One of them dipped her hands in the sparkling water and the drops looked like diamonds falling from her palms. "See what beautiful hands I have! The water runs from them like precious jewels," she said, and held up her hands for the others to admire. They were very soft and white, for she had never done anything but wash them in clear, cold water.

Another of them ran to get some strawberries and crushed them in her palms. The juice ran through her fingers like wine from a wine press until her fingers were as pink as the sunrise in the early morning. "See what beautiful hands I have! The strawberry juice runs over them like wine," said she, and she held up her hands for others to admire. They were very pink and soft, for she had never done anything but wash them in strawberry juice every morning.

Another one gathered some violets and crushed the flowers in her hands until they smelled like perfume. "See what beautiful hands I have! They smell like violets in the deep woods in the springtime," said she, and she held up her hands for the others to admire. They were very soft and while, for she had never done anything but wash them in violets every morning.

But now we come to the fourth of the four girls.

The fourth girl did not show her hands but held them in her lap. An old woman came down the road and stopped before the four girls. They all showed her their hands and asked her which were the most beautiful. She

shook her head at each one and then asked to see the hands of the last girl, who held her hands in her lap. The last girl raised her hands timidly for the old woman to see. "Oh, these hands are clean, indeed," said the old woman, "but they are very hard from toil. These hands have been helping Mother and Father dry the dishes, and sweep the floor, and wash the windows, and weed the garden. These hands have been taking care of the baby, and carrying hot tea to Grandma, and showing little brother how to build his blocks and fly his kite. Yes, these hands have been busy making the house a happy home, full of love and care."

Then the old woman vanished, leaving the four girls still sitting by the brook.

Brethren, may our church be of the heart and the ways of that fourth girl, a church of many pairs of beautiful hands that are indeed clean, cleansed by labors of love, beautiful hands engaged in loving one another, caring for one another, may we be a new covenant house full of love and care in the language of the old woman for one another.

We are returning this morning to the "one another" text of the New Testament and I want to pause and note parenthetically as it came to my notice in the past week, if any are interested, you can read quite a study of this reciprocal pronoun, "one another," in volume 3 of Kenneth Wuest's "Word Studies in the Greek New Testament," studies in the vocabulary of the Greek New Testament, pages 142 and following. I'm sure that's what some of you were just waiting to do this afternoon. If you'd like to borrow my volume, you can do it. But with that said, we are taking up this morning the most repeated theme among the "one another" texts, the theme of loving one another.

Now noting the outline, the headings of which are intended to encompass the 16 "love one another" verses we have considered in the first place, the chief is love. Our concern has to do with that which is of first importance, that which is of highest rank, and that is amongst the various virtues in the "one another" texts, the matter of love. Now that is suggested at the very least by the frequency of the repetition of "love" in the "one another" texts. It is expressly identified as preeminent or of highest rank or of that which is all encompassing by the "one another" texts of Romans 13:8, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law," and in verse 10, love "therefore is the fulfillment of the law." There is 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another," and though it is not the exact kind of pronoun, the sense is the equivalent. We have considered under "the chief is love" in the language of Matthew Henry, that love is the leading affection of the soul. In the language of another, the fairest grace of the Holy Spirit, the noblest and loveliest adornment of Christian character. As we look at the "one another" texts, we can say with certainty the chief is love.

Now secondly, we have considered the command to love, the imperative, the directive to love one another. We have seen this in connection to John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one

another." It is set out as a commandment in John 15:12 and 15:17. We come to 1 John 3:23 and this is his commandment, it is a kind of two-sided commandment, we might say, "that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us." In 2 John 5, a text that was not cited with regard to the command to love two Lord's days ago, we read this, "Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning," that is, most likely from the time we first heard the Gospel, from the beginning of the preaching of the apostolic message that sounded upon our ears, that which we have had from the beginning was, what? "That we love one another."

Brethren, in view of love involving the emotions and the feelings, it's not all that but it certainly encompasses that, and in view of the command to love, we can be reminded, among other things, that our emotions, our feelings, are not morally neutral. The moods for which we pass are not morally neutral, they can be defied by the renewed soul acting in love. We have considered the chief is love, the command to love, and now thirdly, noting the outline, the character of love. Our concern two weeks ago began to be under this heading, the distinctive marks of this "one another" love, its distinctive features and attributes, and in the first place we considered that it is brotherly. Romans 12:10, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love," or as it is translated in the Authorized, "Be kindly affectioned to one another with brotherly love." The sense is, in summary, in the sphere of brotherly love, that is, in the sphere of this kind of love arising from what we have in common, we have in common a common life, we have in common shared struggles, similar experiences, the same everlasting destiny, arising from what is agreeable in one another, Christ-likeness, arising from what is attractive in one another, there is to be in this sphere a spiritually natural instinctive flowing-out an efflux of love toward other brethren.

Matthew Henry commenting on the language, "be devoted," or I believe better translated as the King James does, "kindly affectioned," this instinctive efflux of love, Matthew Henry writes, "It signifies not only love but a readiness, an inclination to love, the most genuine and free affection, kindness flowing out as a spring. It properly denotes the love of parents to their children." He's getting at this instinctive constitutional nature of it. "It denotes the love of parents to their children which as it is the most tender, so it is the most natural of any, unforced, unconstrained. Such must be our love to one another and such it will be where there is a new nature and the law of love is written in the heart."

Gardiner Spring then writes on the matter of brotherly love, "Be devoted to one another, be kindly affectioned to one another in brotherly love," and he captures now this nuance that this brotherly love arises from what we have in common. Gardiner Spring writes in his "Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character," "Love to the brethren is also an affection that rests upon the union which believers sustain with Christ. Together they form one mystical body, Christ is the head, they are the members. The same bond which unites believers to Christ binds them to each other. Those who love Christ love those who are like Christ." He's pointing, I believe, to this issue of brotherly love, it's drawn out by what appeals to us. What appeals to us in another brother is that he is like Christ, not withstanding his remaining sin. There is something I can discern of Christ in him and that

resonates between he and I. It's an attraction that calls out our love. "Here all distinctions vanish. Name and nation, rank and party are lost in the common character of believers, in the common name of Christian. They have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all, actuated by the same principles, cherishing the same hopes, animated by the same prospects, laboring under the same encouragements, having the same enemies to encounter, the same temptations to resist, the same hell to shun, the same heaven to enjoy. It is not strange that they should love one another." Again, he's pointing as Matthew Henry pointed, to the nuance of what is instinctive. He's pointing to that which is distinctive about brotherly love and arises from what we have in common. It's brotherly.

Now as we continue on this morning to a second characteristic, we take up the matter that this "one another" love is to be fervent, and I would ask you now to turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1:22 and this is the text we'll be working in for this and the following heading concerning the character of love. 1 Peter 1:22, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart." Now contextually 1 Peter 1 beginning at verse 13 through chapter 2, verse 3, contain five imperatives arising from the salvation described in chapter 1, verses 3 to 12. The fourth of the five imperatives is before us here in verse 22 rendered in the NAS, "fervently love one another from the heart." Now again, to economize a few words, in the more immediate context, the sense is having experienced a moral cleansing and transformation, note back or note the language, purified, a perfect tense telling us that this occurred at conversion and its results continue on. Because you have been purified and regenerated, verse 23, you have been born again, another perfect tense referring back to the time of conversion and regeneration but that is not mere history, it has abiding results. Because of this moral transformation, because you have been regenerated to new life, you have been born again, here is the imperative, "fervently love one another from the heart."

Note the adverb in verse 22 translated "fervently." It is a compound that most simply means "to stretch out." It was a term that was used to describe a galloping horse. If you saw a clip of Belmont yesterday, you saw an illustration of what this term "fervently" means in terms of the galloping, stretched-out, straining racehorses. The idea of fervent is the idea of that which is extended. It conveys the sense of strain, of intensity of effort. As I thought about this adverb, fervently, I thought about an exercise that I went through, I believe it was Wednesday, in my garage having returned the night before from Virginia. Before departing because of a faulty connection between the garage door motor and the switch, I unplugged the garage door motor from the socket overhead about halfway across the rafters in the garage ceiling. That's the easy part, the hard part is when you get back and you have to plug it back in because the garage door doesn't open without the power. When I got back on Wednesday, I believe it was, I was reminded that upon leaving I had not left enough space to get a ladder between the two vehicles in the garage so I had to crawl through the van, open the door partially on the side of that socket above the head, stand in the doorway as best I could and stretch, and regrettably I could only stretch with my left arm because of the way all of this was positioned, and I stretched and I strained but I couldn't make it. But it was an illustration of what fervent meant. It was no superficial effort. There was an extension and an effort that in this case failed and

found me climbing up the back of the van, across the roof, and sliding across the roof to get it that way. It's a lot of effort for something that seems so simple, but in my case that exercise of stretching, that's what literally "fervent" means. Extended, laid-out in a strain to do something.

Fervently conveys doing something not casually, not with little attention, not with little concern or focus, not in a perfunctory going through the motions manner, but rather doing something intensely, doing something energetically, whole-heartedly. As one writes with regard to verse 22 and fervently, what's called for here is the intensity of Christian love. It is the call for love at full capacity. Fervently, I would offer, suggests at least the following: fervently loving one another suggests, at least, that loving one another may not always be easy. There may be difficulties, difficulties to be overcome that require analogously a stretching and straining. Those difficulties may be within us, our native selfishness, our busyness, our preoccupation with our own agendas. The difficulties may be within us or the difficulties may be within that one who has purposed to be the object of my fervent love. There may be little, if any, reciprocity on their part and when that's the case, love is not something easy to extend, it requires a stretching, a fervency. Fervently loving one another from the heart suggests that loving one another can't always be done conveniently and quickly and easily nor instantly.

Positively speaking, it suggests that often it's costly and we are reminded here that such love, fervent love, grows in no native soil, rather it is the fruit of a heart purified, purified of selfishness, purified of a reigning laziness, purified of a reigning cheapness and stinginess and miserliness with others. It is the fruit of having the heart purified of such, the fruit of having been born again unto new life in Christ which entails as a consequence love for his people, the selfless, costless, energetic activity of fervent love, in other words, as the fruit and the evidence of union with Christ.

Well, brethren, this "one another" love, it's brotherly, it's fervent, it requires us to stretch and strain quite often, now thirdly as to the character of this "one another" love, it is sincere. Again in verse 22 of 1 Peter 1, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren." Now if any of you have some kind of study Bible, surely many of you do, what do you read in your margin? You may have a note that begins, lit., abbreviation for literally. Does anybody have a note like that? What does it read? Un-hypocritical. Why does it read that way? It doesn't tell you but I'll answer. It reads that way because in the original you have the noun for hypocrite and then you have alpha negative that means no hypocrite. The root, hupokrites, from which we get our English "hypocrite," referred literally to a play actor, one who wore a mask as he played a part, as he played a part on a stage. In the language of another underlying the adjective translated here in the NAS "sincere," it may be translated "unfeigned," underlying the adjective is the practice of ancient actors who wore a mask to represent some fictitious character. They come on the stage with a mask and they play a part that is deliberately phony, deliberately a fake. They play a pretended part. Well, it's that term that the New Testament uses, the root of which is found here, that signifies hypocrisy.

Again, the King James renders this "for an unfeigned love of the brethren." J. B. Phillips' paraphrase, "a genuine love of your fellows." Peter's point is this: our love is to be real. Our love is not to be a show. Our love is to be no pretense, no play-acting, but a genuine display of affection and concern for brethren that is rooted in the heart. There is to be some measure of correspondence between what is in the heart and what is done with the hand. In Romans 12:9 Paul writes, "Let love be without hypocrisy." And it's the same term, hypocrite with an alpha negative. Let love be without hypocrisy. In 2 Corinthians 6:6 when Paul is speaking of how he commended his ministry among the particular commendations of it is this one, "in genuine love," and "genuine" translates the same term we are working from in 1 Peter 1:22, rendered here "sincere."

Brethren, above all abominations let us detest hypocrisy and first and foremost in ourselves. If that's to be the case, if it's to be the case that we are to maintain and exercise a sincere love of the brethren, an unfeigned love without hypocrisy, it's going to demand that we keep the heart first and foremost. Later in verse 22, we read, "fervently love one another from the heart." This sincere love is to arise from the heart. Sincerity and genuineness in our loving one another is going to demand in the first place the keeping of our hearts, dealing with our motives, dealing with that persistent desire for reputation and recognition, the desire to be noticed by men and applauded by the same.

I would further add in connection with this third characteristic of love, that love being sincere, beware, brethren, of what John warns of us in 1 John 3, a verbose, a wordy love, a lot of talk, a loquacity with regard to love, barren of self-expending actions. Further, beware of what we might call big splash, extravagant displays of seeming love again calculated perhaps to gain the eyes of others, or perhaps calculated to make up for what we consider a deficit in our performance. In the language of William Harrold down in Norfolk, beware that "our loving actions not be dutifully performed rites of civility for the sake of politeness." In other words, we want to be respectable, we want to be known as polite and civil people, and thus we perform this, we do that, but really not in the name of love but in the name of having good manners and keeping up our image before others. Beware of prayerless forms of seemingly loving expressions, forms and actions and deeds done with little or no prayerful reflection upon the object of the love. Beware of an aftermath of complaining about what our loving actions cost us, or an aftermath of complaining about the ungratifying response of the recipient of those actions.

In the language of another, this "one another" love is "love without a mask." It's brotherly love, it's fervent love, love at a full stretch, it's to be sincere love, and now fourthly and finally as for the character of this love, it's to be self-denying and manifest. Now we can say this in a number of ways: self-denying and manifest, sacrificial and demonstrative, self-expending and practical.

Now in this connection, I again conscript by way of introduction into this fourth characteristic another account that some of you perhaps remember. It's entitled from McGuffey's Readers, "Which Loved Best?" It concerns a mother who had three children, one named John, one named Nell, and one named Fan.

"I love you Mother,' said little John;  
Then forgetting his work, his cap went on.  
And he was off to the garden swing,  
Leaving his mother the wood to bring.

'I love you Mother,' said rosy Nell,  
'I love you more than tongue can tell.'  
Then she teased and pouted full half the day.  
Till her mother rejoiced when she went to play.

"I love you Mother,' said little Fan,  
'Today I'll help you all I can;  
How glad I am that school doesn't keep!'  
So she rocked the baby til he fell asleep.

Then stepping softly, she took the broom,  
And swept the floor, and dusted the room.  
Busy and happy all day was she;  
Helpful and cheerful as a child could be.

'I love you Mother,' again they said,  
Three little children going to bed.  
How do you think their mother guessed  
Which of them really loved her best?"

Well, the answer to that is bound up in our fourth characteristic. Mother knew that Fan loved her best because Fan gave of herself, gave of her time, gave of her energies and efforts to help her mother, to rock the baby, sweep the floor, dust the room. Fan's example reminds us that the character of our love for one another is not only to be brotherly, fervent and sincere, but is to be self-denying and manifest.

Our text, among others, we go back to John 13:34 briefly, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you," there's the sense, "even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." And two chapters later at verse 12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you." Now you may recall back when we considered the fruit of the Spirit is love, that one of the headings was that this fruit of the Spirit, love, is a "just as" kind of love. We're saying the same thing here. Just as, even as, however translated, it is the same adverb that indicates comparison, directs attention to the nature of something which is a pattern, which is a model to be copied. What is the model, what is the pattern? Again John 13:34, "that you love one another, even as I have loved you." There's the model, the love of Christ for us. John 15:12, "you love one another, just as," here's the instructive model, "I have loved you." In Ephesians 5:2, "walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up." And husbands, Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

What is at the heart of this fourth characteristic? What is at the heart of it is self-denial. What is at the heart of it is a sacrificial demonstration of love, self-denying, expressed, practical, manifest love which is purposed to secure the welfare of love's object. I ask this morning, brethren, who are those around us for whom you and I need to put aside self, for whom you and I need to go outside of ourselves? Who are those for whom you and I need to get beyond our own seemingly consuming agendas, our constrained schedules, and our frantic busyness and fervently and sincerely expend our time, expend our resources, give of our energies in the name of Christ, and the only agenda is to enhance their interest? No doubt that is a challenge, it is a challenge in a life of commuting, of tight schedules, of multiple demands, but if we are in Christ, members of one another, it is a challenge that each of us must meet if we are followers of Christ and residents and dwellers of his church. We must manifest love not in word only but in ways of self-giving, of self-expenditure, of sacrifice and demonstration.

This "one another" love, it's brotherly, it's at full stretch, fervent, it's love with a mask, sincere, and it's love after the instructive model of Christ giving himself for us, self-denying and manifest. Sixteen times in the text I printed for you on the reverse side of the outline, 16 times we're directed to love one another and the character of this "one another" love at least includes these four characteristics.

Now we have two final headings. We may or may not come to them. I'm purposed that this not become a drawn out series but if I do not take them up, let's quickly look at the fourth. The copiousness of this love. Now the word "copiousness" is a noun, speaks of that which is abundant, that which is plentiful, that which is full, overflowing, and there are three "one another" texts that convey to us that our love for one another is to be a copious love.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:11, "Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase," the sense is to have more of, "may the Lord cause you to increase and abound," that's the picture of something overflowing as waters overflow the banks, "may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you."

Then in the next chapter at verse 9, "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more." And what is rendered there "excel" was rendered in the previous text "abound." Again, the picture of overflowing, gushing out still more.

And in 2 Thessalonians 1:3, "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater." The language grows is the language of increase in the first of the three texts, expands, becomes more.

Brethren, I believe we can say with a measure of confidence what Paul said of the Thessalonians back in chapter 4 of his first letter at verse 10, "for indeed you practice it,"



I do believe there is this "one another" love in our midst," but Paul reminds us as he reminds the Thessalonians there's room to increase and may it be so. May it be so that our love one for another grows ever greater, increases, and in its demonstrations overflows, abounds and excels still more. The copiousness of love.

Finally this morning, the conclusions one can draw from this "one another" love and there are at least three conclusions. We can stay in 1 Thessalonians 4:9 and note the first of the three. "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." If there is evidence and reality of this brotherly, fervent, sincere, sacrificial and manifest love, conclusion 1: the Holy Spirit is our tutor within. The Spirit of God using the word of God is schooling us. We can draw that conclusion.

Moving to 1 John 4, a second conclusion, at 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." Really two conclusions bound up in that one text. "Is born of God," that takes us back to where we began in 1 Peter 1:22 and 23. We have had this moral transformation, purified for a sincere love of the brethren, thus we are to fervently love one another from the heart for we have been born again, born unto new life. We draw the conclusion that we have been born of God and we know him not simply academically, not with a bare doctrinal orthodoxy, but we know him relationally and vitally and dynamically in the soul.

Then moving back to John 13:35 there is this conclusion, beyond the conclusions that arise from "one another" love that we are taught of God, born and know God, John 13:35, "all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." You're acquainted with the ancient writing, again I believe it's ascribed to Tertullian originally, of what the pagans said about the Christians, "Behold how they love one another." The pagans may not have understood their doctrine, in fact, it seems they railed and scorned their doctrine, but the pagans saw something in their lives, their love for one another, that arrested their attention. Modern day pagans may well be the same. They do not understand our London Confession, they do not understand what makes us tick, as it were, but in this dog-eat-dog secular world, in the world of me-ism, they may well be constrained to say at least to themselves when they become acquainted with the church of "one anothers," who love one another, "Behold how they love."

Brethren, may that be our testimony, that attest that we are Christ's disciples. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." I believe we're justified in saying there is nothing we can do that would adorn our testimony any greater, any more winsomely, nothing we could do to make it any more compelling to the unconverted than by giving ourselves afresh to brotherly, fervent, sincere, self-denying, manifest love to one another. It will be the loudest profession we can make that we are Christ's disciples if you have love for one another.

Let us pray.

*Father, I pray that whatever else may be our deficiencies, whatever else may be our defects, that, Father, there would be a full abounding supply of love for one another in this new covenant house; that Father, this would be a house with many pairs of beautiful hands busy in loving and caring for one another, making this a house full of love. Father, may it be our great concern to give substance and credit to what we say, to how we lay down our lives for one another, and so often in the little things of life, may we be a church of brothers and sisters fervently, genuinely loving one another even as Christ has loved us. May our testimony be guaranteed by our excelling still more. In such love I pray. Amen.*