

Give yourself to brotherly love, v.8

- I. The excellence of Christian love and why we should pursue it above all.
 - A. God Himself is the pattern for it and His Son, Jesus Christ, is the greatest example of it, 1Jn 4.7-8; Eph 5.1-2.
 - 1. This is the highest point of conformity with God and the nearest resemblance we can have of God on earth—when we love one another earnestly as He has loved us and forgive as we have been forgiven, Jn 13.35; 1Jn 3.14.
 - B. It's God's love for us which gives us our greatest motive to love one another, 1Jn 4.11-12; 2Cor 5.14.
 - 1. How can we not love others, when we've been so loved? To know God's love is to be motivated by it to love one another, 1Jn 4.20-21.
 - C. Love is the bond of perfection, Col 3.14.
 - 1. Love is a band which holds all other graces and Christian virtues in their proper place, so that without love, even the best of graces will be mismanaged.
 - 2. We look most like Christ and do most for Christ when we love one another as He's loved us, because love for one another makes way for every other duty we owe to one another, Rom 13.9. That's why Paul speaks so highly of love in 1Cor 13.4-7.
 - D. It's a comprehensive commandment, Gal 5.14.
- II. The marks of Christian love and what it looks like in practice.
 - A. Love serves others, Jn 13.15-16, 34.
 - 1. Christ calls us to a love which is self-denying, seeks the welfare of others above itself, and in humility counts others as more significant than itself. The sin of self-love can't say no to itself, but Christian love can't say no to others, Gal 6.2, 10.
 - B. Love seeks peace with all men, Heb 12.14; Rom 12.18.
 - 1. When we grow in the love of God we grow in the peace of God and we see that Christ not only came to make peace between us and God but to make us peacemakers among men, Mt 5.9.
 - 2. The devil came to bring division and discord, but Christ came to bring unity and peace. Therefore we're always to behave in such a way that our actions and words aim at peace.
 - C. To practice brotherly love is to practice forgiveness, Col 3.8.
 - 1. Nothing is more necessary among God's people than to cherish brotherly love because there's none of us who doesn't have a multitude of faults to be forgiven. We should willingly and earnestly forgive those who sin against us because we, too, stand in need of such forgiveness, Mt 6.12; Js 3.2.
 - 2. Our love shouldn't be interrupted by the sudden failings and sins of one another, Eph 4.32-5.2. The reach of God's love over our many, many sins stretches our love over our brother's sins. If we've not learned to forgive, we've not learned to love, 1Jn 4.20-21.
- III. The motives for Christian love should encourage us to pray more for this love and to be more earnest in practicing it among ourselves.
 - A. It's a commanded duty and not mere advice, Jn 15.12.
 - 1. We can't look at loving one another as a matter of indifference which we can practice or not as we please. It's a duty we owe to God and a debt we owe to one another, Rom 13.8-10.
 - 2. Furthermore, it's Christ's dying charge. And should we not reverence His dying wishes?
 - B. It's an old command (Lev 19.18) which Christ adopted into His gospel ethics and illustrated in His own life (Jn 15.12), 1Jn 2.7-8.
 - 1. In the OT, His authority carried it, but in the new His example carries it.
 - 2. In the OT the church stood in awe of the command because it came down from God in heaven, but now we stand in awe of the command because the God of heaven came down to fulfill it—toward us and now in us.
 - C. It's a duty which most reveals the temper of Christianity, which is wholly made up of love, Jn 3.16; 1Jn 4.9-10.
 - 1. If we don't love one another then how can we say we know God, who is love? How can we say we know Christ, who is love incarnate? And how can we preach the gospel to the world, which is a gospel of love?
 - 2. Our love for one another commends Christianity, Jn 13.35.
 - D. There's none of us who isn't plagued with many faults and only the love of God at work in us can cover our many sins. There's no way we can live and worship together without earnestly loving and forgiving one another. Therefore pray for more of this love so the world will say of us, *Behold, how they love one another!*