

## Living as the Family of God

Let us turn to our Bibles to 1st Timothy chapter 5. 1st Timothy chapter 5, as I'm continuing through the letters here of Paul to the pastors, 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy, and Titus. Here, part 2 of 1st Timothy 5, 1 through 2, will go into the family of God. Let us listen attentively to the word of God.

Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father. Younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity. Let us pray.

Indeed, God Almighty, as we read here, it is assumed that we will treat one another as brothers and sisters, and we ought to in that regard, God, with respect to rebuke and exhortation. But Lord, therefore, we see there's more to the Christian life than rebuke and exhortation. There is the living, and what it means to, therefore, be, and to enact, and to, we pray, understand what it means to be the family of God by our actions and the things that we do or do not do in accordance to the will of God.

And so, Lord God Almighty, help us to see these things, to be encouraged, and to be strengthened, God, to continue in this understanding of the relationship that we have with one another through Christ Jesus our Lord, and the baptism that we share in common with one another. And thus, we are called the family of God. Amen.

The Spirit calls you to a one another life. This is true. We are called to love one another, to unite with one another, to edify one another, to be friendly with one another, to admonish one another, to serve one another, to bear with one another's burdens, to speak the truth to one another as well, to abound in love with one another.

And that's just a few of the 50 plus verses about the one another life of Christians. But it's not the only way to describe the Christian life. The family metaphor is another way, as we see here in verses 1 and 2 of 1st Timothy 5. It's another way to describe a one another life.

The two themes are tied explicitly in Romans 12 10. Let us go there to Romans 12 10, right after Acts. Romans 12 10.

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love. There's the one another, and there's the metaphor of a family. In honor, giving preference to one another.

So the picture of brotherly love is explicitly tied to care and love for each other. It explains the mode by which we show such love and care of this life of one edifying one another, uniting with one another, bearing and serving one another in the mode of a family. You're not supposed to treat each other as strangers.

You're not supposed to treat each other as business partners. You're not supposed to treat each other as members of a club. Those are fine in their place in our life, but with respect to the church, the strongest and most consistent metaphor and the image we are called is the family.

As such, let me summarize the church as a family metaphor with three one another passages. They describe what it looks like to be in a family. To love, brotherly love towards one another, to live in the light of God's love for one another, and to have a like-mindedness.

So it's a sermon of encouragement, brothers and sisters. It is here to remind you to keep doing what you are doing, and that's unto the Lord. You must love, live, and be like-minded with one another because we are the family of God.

## **Brotherly Love**

So the first point, love or brotherly love in particular, it's a command. It's important to remember this. In John 13: 34, and 35, we read, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.

So there's that one another. As I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, I will know that you are my disciples if you have, what? Love for one another.

It's a great motivation here: to love Christ. And as I have loved you, he says, therefore you ought to love one another. For he is the source of our love.

He is the model for our love. He is the motivation for our care and consideration for one another in the household of God. It's Christ-centered.

We love, take care of, support, and the like, our brothers and sisters, because of Jesus. The object, of course, here, the purpose for this, is there is a public recognition as followers of Christ. By this, all will know, that is all the world, those looking from the outside to the inside of the Christian living, and the life, and the churches of the day, and of today as well, that you are my disciples.

They're going to say, these are followers of Jesus, because they take care of one another. They love one another. They treat each other as brothers, and sisters, and fathers, and mothers.

They take this stuff seriously. Not just a club. And so our public confession must be wedded with our public actions of care, and of love, and consideration for one another.

This is our witness to the world, as well, of course, as the spoken word, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. And as a command, loving the church means it's not an option for believers. We talked a little bit about this this morning in Sunday School class, as I'm going over sanctification, and specifically the second greatest goal of sanctification.

The greatest going goal, of course, is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself, and your neighbor includes enemies. And I specified enemies within the church.

That is, you can be at loggerheads with brothers and sisters. You know it happens. You've seen it.

And you may not use the word enemy, but it's an appropriate word insofar as you are antagonistic with one another, maybe on only a specific narrow topic, but it's still serious. But at the same time, what? You recognize them as members of God's household, as family members, as someone you love, in spite of the conflict that you have. I know it's hard.

I know it's a lot of tension inside your life, but you do it anyways. Why? Because they're the family. You're part of the same family, like you do in your own biological family.

You put up with a lot. You may even butt heads with your crazy uncle or something, or your father, as a son does with the father at times, but the love is still there. That's what's being highlighted.

And it's a command, and you know it intuitively in the family. You're like, I don't, you may even say I hate them, but at the end of the day, often you repent. You're like, I still got to love them.

I'm still going to take care of them. I'm still going to spend time with them. I still got to do what I need to do for my family.

And Christ is saying, take that model, in various degrees of course, in various intensities, because you don't live with one another, you live with your family, and apply it to the church. It's for all Christians, and it's not just an abstraction. Love one another.

Have good feelings with one another. That's nice and good. I want you to have that, but it's in the concrete, right? You run across this sometimes, where people seem to love humanity, but hate people.

You're like, what's going on here? And sometimes that's a temptation in the church as well. They love the idea of the church, but all these particular people in churches, I don't want to deal with them at all. Yeah, stay away from me.

Oh no, a thousand times no. Jesus is saying something more than that, as we'll find out from the other verses. So Romans 12, 10 is next.

It's not only a command, of course, it's a particular command, a brotherly love for one another. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor, giving preference to one another. So he gives some specifics of what this brotherly love looks like.

You're supposed to love the church like you love your family. Remember, like is a comparative, not the same exact way. I don't want you going into other's business, as it were.

You have your own life, that's true. I don't expect you to drop up someone's door one morning. It's kind of creepy.

Every day, what's going on here? You're not best friends. You can't be friends, in other words, in the same way with every member of the household of God, but you still treat them as family. Again, just like a crazy uncle.

You don't want to be friends with them, but he's family, and you put a little respect in your treatment with him. But here, the emphasis, of course, is to maintain unity in the New Testament context of that unity being modified. See, in the Old Testament, right, you had all these layers of love overlapping.

We talked about *agape*, *phileo*, which is brotherly love or preciousness, and then *storge*, which is natural affections. They had that in spades, of course, because what? They're all Jews. They all have the same biological heritage, as a general rule, because you can still join the Jewish Church and not be a biological Jew.

But the vast majority of them already had that natural affinity towards one another, like you literally have with extended family, and a large extended family, kinsfolk. That is being modified, to some extent, in the New Testament. It's still there, if you happen to have a Jewish Church, and you had a lot of Jewish churches in early parts of Acts, before the Gentiles were converted, didn't you? And Paul's concern, and the rest of the Bible, is you can bring the Gentiles in.

You don't have that affinity, that's true. They are not biologically related in the immediate sense of Abraham, that's true, but they're still God's people. They're still made in His image, and you must therefore try hard not to have that Jewish prejudice anymore, and bring them in, and love them.

That's the context. And so this brotherly love is emphasized often, this kind of love and care for one another in the body of Christ. The word here, you have in Romans 12.10, is significant and important here.

I already unpacked a little bit in my description here. Brotherly love, where we get Philadelphia, that's the city of brotherly love. That's it, right here.

That's the word. So we have an English for it, although we don't usually use the English. It's a formal title of a city.

That's what it comes from. Treating church members as though they're a brother, or mother, or sister, to extend the metaphor, or like an uncle, or an aunt, or a grandparent. We talk about our forefathers in the faith, our grandparents in the faith.

That's a beautiful picture. That's the proper way of speaking. And so here, Romans 12.10, it's the same idea as here in 1st Timothy 5, 1 and 2. The love of friendship, or pleasantness.

And so Phileia, or Philadelphia, emphasized, if you want to use one word for it, it's preciousness, that you have for one another in Christ Jesus. Pleasantness, excuse me. Preciousness is *agape*, and then natural affection is *storge*.

B.B. Warfield helpfully summarizes this, and if you want, I can give you the article. Paul doubles down in the New Testament on this church relationship, of course, the family model, to reinforce kindly affection. That's why I picked this text.

Not only does it tie it to the one another ideas, one another, one another, is all under the rubric of the family, but here he says kindly affectionate. That is also a compound word like Philadelphia. It's a unique word, as Paul likes to bring up new unique words you won't find often in other parts of Greek literature.

It's quite fascinating. Paul was very intelligent. God had blessed him so much.

That word, kindly affectionate, is a compound word with the word friendship and storge combined together. Phileia, Philadelphia, brotherly love, Phileia combined with storge, natural affection. He's saying that natural affection that most of you had, because you were Jews, that came intuitively.

You're a Jew, I'm a Jew, we're all the same kind of culture, the same, literally, relatives in a lot of cases, at least way down the chain to Abraham. Take that way of thinking and apply it to the church. So he makes this word up.

Find them as a pleasant friendship and as well as a natural relationship now. Although it's not technically natural insofar as we're not related. We just, I mean, there's Irish, there's Greek, there's Korean, there's different heritages, right, and lineages.

That's that natural affection. It's not the same in the church. They're all combined often.

He's saying, but take it anyways. Do something like that. Make it more present, precious and pleasant in our lives.

Treat it as a family. Giving preference to one another, that's what it looks like, to consider or esteem as greater than yourself. In other words, there's no place for pride.

And that fits that model and the concern you have in the New Testament era at the beginning of the New Testament Church in which the Jews had a lot of pride. The Pharisees were better than you Gentile dogs. And Jesus is like, well, now the Gentile dogs are saved and they're part of the body of Christ and being Jewish isn't special anymore.

It's special only insofar as it's a natural relationship. That's good. They should love Jews and just like, you know, the Irish love being Irish and the Koreans love being Korean.

That's fine. That has its place. But that should be subservient in the church with respect to conflicts of pride.

And he's saying here, give preference to one another like you give preference to your older brother, to your father, to your mother in the Church of God. It's a doable command. I want to highlight this fact.

It's not impossible. You are blessed by the Spirit for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Right? Philippians.

You have shown love to one another in the many years that I've been in this church. You don't need more talent. You don't need more money.

I know you want that. And it's not necessarily a bad want. I would like to have more money, not for being a millionaire, because I want to give more to the church and people in need.

That's all there is to it. But God limits us and we should accept that limit and do what we can to show love and care and consideration for one another and keeping it up. Have a willing heart, a ready mind to hear, to use your hands and feet for one another as brothers and sisters.

And of course it's different at different times and different places, different schedules or conflict, and so you can't do all these things that you want at times. We should accept that and not get frustrated. But we are still able to do something.

Then the disciples, each according to his ability. Acts 11.29. The disciples, each according to his ability. They know they're limited, but they're going to do something.

Determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. Brethren, there's that language again, of the family of God. And like you would with a brother who's in need halfway across the world.

You haven't seen him in a long time, but he's related to you. He's part of your family. You can give them the help that they need.

And so he says take that kind of mindset, when possible, can't always do it, and apply it to the church of God. That kind of love. That kind of consideration.

It's not an unlimited metaphor. I've hinted that as well. We don't support one another.

You don't expect the father over here to pay the bills of this other family over there. No. You have your own responsibilities.

You'll see that in the remaining part of chapter 5 where he says if you don't work and take care of your family, you're worse than an infidel. So there are limits to the metaphor. That's true.

But it's roughly, I guess I would say, somewhere between friends or good neighbors is how we treat the church often. It's more than a club. That's important in this day and age, I think, to remind us and those around us.

It's an individual command. We're each called to love one another. It's not just the guy next to you and the person behind you, but you in particular.

Not to be best friends with everyone in the church, but nevertheless, to have more care than as if they were strangers that you had never met before. There are practical ways to do this, and certainly prayer. That's why we have prayer time in the morning on Sunday.

It's a time for you to get together and learn a little more about one another. As you learn, that helps grow love and care and consideration. What they're going through difficult times, too.

It's not just me. They need some help. I've been through something like that.

Maybe I can apply some of the experience and wisdom I have into their life. That's love. That's care.

It's a corporate command as well. Not just you, but all of us together. Because, of course, we're swamped with work.

We have problems at home. We don't even live near each other like we used to for a long time. It has its drawbacks, of course.

This is one of them. We don't get to see each other, and that can be hard. You may have physical problems.

That's fine. And these limitations are made up for by what? One thing is the Deaconate office. It's there to help alleviate physical financial concerns for the deserving poor among us.

Among God's people. To show love, not always by you, but here by a man who represents you, the deacon. And giving it to those and helping people, even.

Giving them advice to get out of their problem, if that's what they need. And so the deacon is one obvious way. Christ was so concerned with the bodily concerns of his own people, he gave us the office there in Acts 6. And you can do more, of course, collectively by combining our funds.

And so we do this as well, not just locally, but with respect to presbyteries. And we give some monies at times to the work of the presbytery, which is a collection of churches, a regional collection of churches, so that they can help and do things that individual churches could not pull off. That's what cooperation is about.

That's what I mean by a cooperative, or corporate, excuse me, responsibility of love.

## **Shared Love**

Next is not only a brotherly love, that's a description of the family of God, but a shared life of love. This is clearly an overlapping category, as I already gave some description of sharing our life with one another, sharing our resources, sharing our time and the like.

Life here, meaning sharing the same church and community. It's local, often. If you jump in the car and drive south to another church every Sunday, but your membership is in not that church, but another one, that's not a shared life, you know, is it? I mean the opposite of that.

A shared life means serving one another, Galatians 5. For you, brethren, you have been called to liberty, only do not use the liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, that is for sinful desires and thinking about yourself only, but through love, serve one another. Liberty in Christ is not about you, but what you can get out of things, although there's some truth to that, so far as you're saved by God's grace, and you got to pray to God and the like, we've talked about that, but often people quickly turn it to something selfish, this liberty and freedom that we have, and he says the liberty here is about loving one another. Use it for that end, and living our lives together as the family of God is one way in which we do this.

A shared life also means bearing with one another. To bear with one another, Ephesians 4, 2, and 3. Bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We could use the language today of put up with.

You put up with that crazy uncle, that madman, because he's family, or you ought to, and we do the same thing in the church of God. Now I know because of sin, there's a breakdown there, and you have different churches maybe, as your crazy uncle, as opposed to an individual, it could be a corporate problem. That's true, you don't always have to be in the same church with them, that's true, nevertheless, the command here is: when you are there, and you are in the church, to bear with one another in love, to put up with sins, and turn the other way, and not always bring up these difficulties around you. Love covers a multitude of sins, that's one way in which it bears with one another, and puts up with, and carries in as long suffering, there's another translation, another word elsewhere, that's part of the shared life of the church of God.

To maintain peace, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace, because you don't want to break up that relationship that we have as a church, with respect to our baptism or our common confession, unless you have to, and there are times for it, of course. You're not attached to a church the same way you're attached to a family, you can leave and go elsewhere, but you can't leave your family, they're kind of always with you, you have that shared history, always. You cannot love unless you bear with one another, you cannot bear with one another unless you live in a community, that you have this idea of what it means to bear with sin, to bear with ignorance, to bear with impatience, to bear with incompetence, but living with each other presupposes also what? A like-mindedness.

Love, and living, and like-mindedness are the three big ways, not the only ways, of describing a family of God.

## **Like-Minded Love**

And so the third point, Romans 12.16 is this good passage for this point. Romans 12.16, Be of the same mind toward one another.

Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. And so what you think, one thing you notice here, see this all throughout the New Testament, all throughout the Bible, is when he gives warnings, the author gives warnings, the Holy Spirit is warning people, that warning is telling us what's going on in the church.

What he thinks is important for them to hear about, because we know there's other problems that could have been going on there, adultery or something, but he didn't pick that, he picked something that was pressing, a pressing matter here, and they're apparently those who would not associate with the poor. We see that in James, for example, right, the book of James, and wanting the high places of sitting in the church, special privilege and the like, and God says here, be humble, be with the humble, don't think you're better than others. Do not be wise in your own opinions, another problem.

But before all this, he says, be of the same mind toward one another. That's one of the one another passages, describing the family of God. Not just the same mindset or thinking as such, but it's shorthand for harmony, because you're not going to be on the same page with everything, that's obviously the case.

But enough of the substantial things that you can be in the same building with one another, and worship the same God together, that's the kind of like-mindedness he's talking about, harmony. Live in harmony with one another, do not be snobbish, but readily associate with humble folk, do not be conceited, is a paraphrase by the commentator William Hendrickson, a Dutch reform man. Certainly there must be overlap and agreement on important matters, again, where the harmony turns to chaos, to be of same mind towards one another, in one way, by attitude, by attitude.

Positively, enough commonality of thought and understanding, of course, maintains this truth, it doesn't make sense if you have serious disagreements to associate with such a church, because you're going to be in conflict all the time, don't do that. If you can avoid it, of course, sometimes you find yourself, the church changes on you, that happens over time, generationally, unfortunately. Another way to maintain a same mindset or like-mindedness towards one another, just attitude, but on the flip side, not to be stuck up, not to be conceited, as he points out here, associate with the humble.

Do not be wise in your own opinion, quick to think you've got all the right answers. The same mind, or the same likeness of thinking and the like, is further preserved by church attendance and fellowship meals and weekly gatherings and communications with one another, and the like. So we can see that we are indeed on the same page, and be encouraged thereby.

Same mindedness, same likeness of thinking is important for the Christian living and the like, to be like-minded with respect to love, what even love even looks like. Romans 15.5 is another description of this. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another.

So it's more than one passage, he's concerned that they maintain this like-mindedness. According to Christ Jesus that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although you may not have thought of this before, the idea of with one mind, or one purpose even, is one way to understand that, is helped, supported, and reinforced by a common confession.

We have a common confession, presumably because we have a common way of thinking about the Bible. That's the point of it. It tells one another, and the world, and people coming to our church or denomination, this is our like-mindedness.

We come together here on the Westminster Confession of Faith, the larger and shorter catechism. It has lots of details, I know, because there's lots of details in life and in the Bible. But it's showing, it has this positive effort of maintaining this third point.

If you want to live together as Christians, you've got to be like-minded, or you're going to be in conflict with one another. That is enough like-mindedness that there's no conflict. That's the point.

Again, there's a lot of details to be sure. We may have disagreements, and to the extent that we can maintain that, we ought to maintain unity in spite of those disagreements. Acts 2.46 shows us another way in which having one mind, or one purpose, or one way of thinking is enacted.

And so continually, daily, with one accord in the temple, in breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. Because that they were of one mind, and one baptism, and one Lord, and one faith, they could enact such intimate actions of love and consideration, and the fellowship and the like, breaking bread from house to house even. They didn't have church buildings back then, of course, and so that was the way they had to do such things.

But the point being, being of one mind is not just confession, it's also action. It brings forth, and must therefore show through our events and actions. We have, of course, the same goals, is another way of describing being like-minded.

To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. To obey the Spirit. To love the brethren.

Those are major points, a lot more detail to be sure. Which Christ? Which brethren? Those are important. But a reminder that like-mindedness is a lot of things.

The command to love is not an isolated command of Jesus Christ. It necessitates living together as the people of God, as a family of God. Not in isolation or indifference towards one another.

Living together necessitates being like-minded as well. Being the family of God must mean understanding what that means. Having the same thoughts with respect to the Word of God.

Having the same vision of Christ's glory and love for one another. You must keep loving, brothers and sisters. Living and being like-minded with one another as the family of God.

For this is how we ought to operate as His chosen ones. And you can by God's mercy through Christ Jesus. And I pray you continue. Amen. Let us pray.

And so Lord, may you continue to preserve us by your Spirit.

Grant us more of your strength and love for one another. As we meditate upon what Christ has done for us. Remember Lord, as He told us, as I have loved you, you ought to love one another. Have care and consideration as the family. As a new family, not one that replaces the old family, God, to be sure. But nevertheless, it's a powerful metaphor, I pray. That will come reaching to our hearts if we have become a little too hardened to this fact. And God, may your name be glorified in all that we do. By the blood of Christ Jesus. Amen.