

Be Hospitable

1 Peter 4:9-11

8 Above all things, have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins. 9 *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.* 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:9-11 (NKJV))

A thought as we begin our consideration of these words of our text . . . this life that you and I “enjoy”, or that we “endure” depending upon our point of view about it, truly is short. Though we might live the fully allotted three-score and ten years, or even more, compared to the thousands of years that men have existed on the earth, and especially compared to the eternity that still lies out in front of us, our time here really is short.

And the encouragement that resounds over and over throughout these Books of 1st and 2nd Peter is, “why not do all that we can do to make these years be as good as they can be, to have a “good life”, and then to turn and help others to have the same “good life” as our own.”

Loving other people and being hospitable towards them is God’s formula for a “good life” on this earth. So why not push aside all those negative thoughts and ideas and habits and join with Christ in enjoying these few days that we have in front of us.

In the precious words given here in verse 8, God declares to us that “love”, “agape love”, has a mysterious power and ability within it that is able to “cover over” a multitude of sins. And that is so! And having that special mysterious power and ability abiding within us is so very important as we go about being the people God desires us to be and in our doing the things that God desires us to do.

May I take a moment and remind us again about the real meaning of this precious word, “love”, because it has so much to do with these next words of our passage. . . . When we read the word “love” in these scriptures, it might actually be speaking about any of three or four different forms of love, all of them good, all of them given to us by God, but each being different, having differing intents and purposes.

This word for love that’s given here in verse 8 where we are told that “love covers over a multitude of sins” is the word “agape”. And while “agape” is similar in meaning to

another word that is often given “philia”, meaning “brotherly kindness and affection”, there is a very real difference. Both of these words, “philia” and “agape” have brotherly kindness and affection within them, but the word “agape” has a very important additional ingredient.

The difference in the meanings of these two forms of love seems best understood by knowing where and how each word originates, in their “source”, and then consequently, in the “power” that resides within each of them.

The “Philia” or “Phileo” form of love, meaning “brotherly kindness and affection”, seems best understood as being the natural kind of love that wells up from within our own soul, having elements of love that originate within our own personality and abilities. But “agape” love originates from a whole other source, outside of our own being, coming directly from the Holy Spirit as a “gift of the Spirit”, and having His power and purpose guiding and directing it. And “agape” love seems always to manifest itself in a far deeper and more “giving” and “forgiving” attitude of soul.

As we observe the use of the word “agape” within these scriptures, we find that it is first an integral part of God’s divine love toward us, and then in a very similar sense, it enables and empowers our love back towards Him.

And then beyond that, as we show the “philia” form of love towards other people, especially fellow believers, God clearly desires that our love rise beyond just the human emotion of “brotherly kindness and affection” and instead extend on forward and become the more divinely inspired “agape” love.

We see that in scripture texts such as John 13:34-35 where we are told that we must love other people with the same love that Jesus has for us. Listen!

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love (agape) one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
(John 13:34-35 (ESV))

For those of us who have Christ as our Savior and Lord, we have both of these forms of love residing within us, the “philia” love and the “agape” love. And that is why in last week’s message, we asked the question, “because we do have these wonderful provisions of love within us, how then should we live each of the remaining days that God has granted to us on this earth?”

And now here in the words of today's text, God adds to those reasons we considered last week, with the words,

9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:9-10 (NKJV))

I wanted to remind us of these different forms of love because, this word in verse 9, "hospitable" is actually one of those forms of love that we just mentioned. The base word that is translated as "hospitable" is "philia", brotherly kindness and affection, but with the added emphasis of a special disposition towards enjoyment of the company and interaction with other people.

And that disposition of hospitality is vital to the life of a church, any church, whether it be members of the local churches to which this letter was originally written, or here within our own church.

The instruction within these words is that it is not enough that people become Christians, and even that they meet together to study the scriptures. Yes, we must do those things, but there is also so much more that we must do. We must also be willing to engage personally and often with one another in a loving and kind way, helping one another in the daily struggles of life.

And may I go a step further and say that God is clear about the matter of Christians being especially kind and loving and helpful to fellow Christians, even more so than we are towards unbelievers. That may not sound exactly right to you, but it's true.

Yes, we are to evangelize and show kindness and love to unbelievers, and God have given us other passages that deal with those relations. But here in these particular words, God is taking the opportunity to give instruction to us within the church about how we are engage with one another.

Here, we are being told to be especially kind and loving and helpful to fellow Christians. And we find those instructions all throughout the New Testament. The next time that you are reading the scriptures, notice the number of times that the expression "one another" or "each other" is used. In almost every case, the "one another" or "each other" is referring to "fellow believers". Listen!

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34)

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." (John 15:12)

“This is my command: Love each other.” (John 15:17)

And this instruction continues all throughout the New Testament, speaking specifically to Christians instructing each of us about how we must act towards and treat other Christians. We are to love them deeply, because love will cover over a multitude of sins.

And that is especially so within the instructions given in our scripture passage for today. We are to be,

9 *Be hospitable to one another* (to other Christians) without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:9-10 (NKJV))

Note here in verse 10 that God reveals to us that our ability to be hospitable will not be solely dependent upon our own personal natural talents, that “Hospitality” is a “Spiritual Gift” placed within us by God Himself, by the Holy Spirit. Yes, again, there are many people who have a natural bent towards being “hospitable”. And that is good. That is a part of the “common grace” that God spreads within human souls.

But the “Spiritual Gift” of “hospitality” that’s spoken about here is very different. Much in the same way that “agape love” the “divinely inspired” love of God is different from our natural “philia love”, so also, the “Spiritual Gift” of “hospitality” is “divinely inspired” and powerfully enabled by the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

You may have once been shy and withdrawn, even fearful about meeting people. But when God implants the “Spiritual Gift” of “hospitality” within you, you are changed. Will you still be shy and withdrawn and even fearful about meeting people? Probably . . . at least to some degree. But the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit who lives within you and me is faithful, and He will give you and me the strength to work our way through our shyness and fear.

In every circumstance where God needs for you to be hospitable, He will be faithful to fill you with the strength and power to carry it forward. And folks, please understand as you read words such as these. These words are not to be taken as mere suggestions. This is clearly a “command” that has no options that will allow for a way out. We are to

9 *Be hospitable to one another* without grumbling. (1 Peter 4:9 (NKJV))

You and I are to be “hospitable”, lovingly kind and affectionate. And because this is a divinely inspired “Spiritual Gift”, we are to intentionally “seek” and “reach for” the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit as we go about expressing “hospitality”.

The Bible Commentator, Matthew Henry gave us these next thoughts regarding this passage. And here he especially addresses how we engage with fellow believers. Here he tells us,

. . . While hospitality, the free and kind entertainment of strangers and travelers is always required, the hospitality shown to fellow believers must be prepared to go farther and beyond that which we show to strangers. The nearness of our relations with fellow believers, and the necessity of their condition in those times of persecution and distress, oblige us to be especially hospitable to one another.

Folks, that is especially so within our own congregation. I recall the words of one of our former members when she told me that she would be leaving to go to another church. It was because she had some friends there that she could fellowship with.

Think about that for a moment. How much better would it have been had we have been providing that loving friendship and fellowship to her.

Matthew Henry goes on to say,

The manner of performing this duty is this: it must be done in an easy and kind manner, and cheerfully without grudging or grumbling at the expense or trouble it may cause. Freely we have received, and freely we must give.

Folks, Matthew Henry wrote those words several hundred years ago, but they are just as appropriate today. Christians ought always to treat fellow Christians with loving kindness and affection.

And again, please understand that this really is not an option. It is a “command” from God and we will be without excuse if we let ourselves fail. As these words remind us, we “stewards” of the “Spiritual Gifts” given to us, and we should work hard at being “good stewards” with our hospitality and not behave slovenly in our duties. God will surely hold us accountable on the day of judgment.

One final thought concerning “hospitality” and especially the “hospitality” that we are here commanded to show toward fellow believers. As I look around at each of you, I must tell you that I not only “love” you, I also “like” each one of you. And I would personally enjoy spending more time with you, getting to know each one of you even better than I do.

And along the way, I might find some way of being helpful to you, and you might find some way that you could be helpful to me.

And that would also be true with each of you towards the other members of this congregation. You might find yourself broken down in your car and wondering who you could call. Or you might just want someone to chat with for a few minutes.

Folks, “love”, and “loving kindness” and “affection” are all such good and enjoyable experiences. Why should we not do more of it?

Our scripture again,

9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:9-10 (NKJV))

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35 (ESV))