

Brotherly Kindness

Brotherly kindness is to be added to our faith, along with virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance and godliness (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Brotherly kindness is translated from the Greek word philadelphia. It is defined as "affection toward brethren," "the love of brothers (or sisters), brotherly love," and "tender affections" (TEGT, Thayer, Vine). In other words, we are to have warm feelings for the children of God.

Paul said, "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom. 12:10). By "giving preference" to our brethren, we express brotherly kindness. We are to look out for the interests of others, not just our own (Phil. 2:1-4). At times this means we must sacrifice our interests in order to see that others have theirs met. Paul did this when he was in Thessalonica. He labored night and day to provide for his needs, while preaching the gospel to those whom he cherished (1 Thes. 2:7-9).

Brotherly love arises from a like precious faith and can exist without ever meeting one another. When Paul wrote Romans, he had never been to that city, yet he longed to see them (Rom. 1:11). He thanked God and constantly prayed for them (Rom. 1:9-10). This was due to their "mutual faith" (Rom. 1:12). When we learn of Christians in other areas enduring great hardships in the faith, it stirs our emotions and brings out our affection and kindness. If it does not, then it is likely we lack faith.

Let us examine ourselves to see if we have added brotherly kindness in our lives. If we lack it, then we need to look at God's example (1 Thes. 4:9). If we have it, then "let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1).

Steven F. Deaton