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LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE

<http://cabc-levelland.blogspot.com/2008/02/let-brotherly-love-continue.html>

I Thessalonians 4: 9-10 **INTRODUCTION:** One of the characteristics of a church that is to separate it from any other organization on earth is the love that her members are to have for one another. The love her members are to have for one another is to come from the shared relationship we have with Jesus Christ. We may be different in many ways but in one thing we are to be the same. We are all to have a love relationship with Jesus Christ. If we have a growing and loving relationship with Jesus, that relationship will cause us to love other believers. I John 4: 21 says, "And this is the commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." John also goes on to state that if a person says he loves God but hates his brother, he is a liar. If we love God, we will love what God loves, and Jesus loved His church and gave His life for it. Jesus also stated that the world would know that we are of Him if we love one another. The world knows that believers, church members, are to act toward one another differently than the world treats one another. The world may treat one another harshly and with a total disrespect for one another, but those same people will look to see if church members love one another. A lost world wants to see if we are real before they will listen to what we have to say. Paul's admonition to this church was for them to love one another. **WHAT BROTHERLY LOVE PRODUCES IN A CHURCH** Brotherly love produces fellowship and unity within a church. Unity and fellowship within the church body is important to God. When Jesus prayed in John 17, His request to the Father was that we be one even as He and the Father are one. Jesus' desire is that there be unity in the church. A unity of mind, heart and purpose. Unity for the Corinthian church was so important to Paul that he wrote in I Corinthians 1: 10, "I plead with you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Even the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 133: 1, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Unity can only be achieved if we have a fellowship that is characterized by brotherly love. To achieve that kind of brotherly love, we must esteem others better than self. The biggest obstacle to unity in the church is the pride and ego of its members. Pride and ego will seek to have its way even if it has to hurt another or disrupt the unity of the church. That pride and ego can be seen in III John in Diotrophes. He loved to have the pre-eminence (he loved to be noticed and have his way) and used malicious words and even the threat of excluding others to get his way. Such sinful behavior will never be seen when we esteem others better than self. Unity will be seen when we esteem others better than self. Unity is also seen when we have a Godly brotherly love that will forgive. From time to time, even Godly people will disagree and maybe even hurt one another's feelings. Paul and Barnabas, two Godly men, disagreed over whether to take John mark with them on their second missionary journey. That disagreement was so intense that it eventually split the team. Paul took Silas and went one direction and Barnabas took mark and went in another. Such disagreements don't have to leave us with life long bitterness and animosity toward one another. Brothers in Christ can forgive one another. Paul forgave Mark and eventually sent for him to work with him. We must learn how to forgive for Jesus' sake. It is in forgiving one another that we reveal that we belong to Christ. The love that forgives will unify a church. Brotherly love will also make us sympathetic toward others in need. That kind of sympathy will enable us to do as Paul says in Romans 12: 15, "weep with those who weep." Brotherly love will also give us the motivation to help those in need. Brotherly love will help us to not just love in word but in deed. Brotherly love will help us to encourage those who are hurting. And, there are people all around us who are hurting. Brotherly love can also cause us to give to those in need. "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" Brotherly love does not make us hard hearted. **BROTHERLY LOVE IS ALSO A TRAIT THAT SHOULD BE GROWING AMONG BELIEVERS** V. 10 Brotherly love should grow in a believer's life simply by its nature. You don't have to teach someone to do what comes naturally. Fish don't take swimming lessons. Birds don't go to flight school. Lost people don't have to take sin lessons. These things come naturally. Believers should not have to take love lessons. Loving another believer should come naturally. Because Jesus lives inside us, it should be our nature to love one another. The deeper our relationship with Christ grows, the more we should be able to love others. Loving believers will come naturally to that one who is growing in Christ. Brotherly love also grows as God puts us in positions to where that love must be modeled. God will often put unlovable people in our path just to teach us how to love. God will also allow us to be offended in order to teach us how to forgive and how to love. What others would call difficulties are really opportunities for us to exhibit the love of God. **CONCLUSION:** God wants his people to demonstrate the characteristics that make God God. That characteristic is love. If we can't love others, we can not truthfully say that we love God. Love is not just a feeling. It is an act of the will. Make the decision. I am going to love others-- even the unlovable.