

Love That Is From God

David Halbrook

One of the weaknesses of the English language is that we use the same word (“love”) when talking about ice cream and our mother---those are very different kinds of “love.”

Love that is from God (revealed in Scripture) involves the way someone **thinks** and **acts** more than the way they **feel**. This is the love Jesus taught of in Matthew 22:37-39. John 3:16 teaches us of the love of God for sinners. He did not **send** Jesus because mankind stirred up exciting emotions in God but because God **knew** that man was lost in sin and could not escape it alone, and He **cared**. In the love of God, proper thoughts produce proper action and emotion.

We hope you remember this when you read our articles that deal plainly with modern sin (infant baptism, worship by playing songs, homosexuality, “fellowship halls”). We do not teach against these things primarily because of how we feel about them but because of what we learn about them from the Bible---they separate you from fellowship with God. **Knowing** that, we **care** about you, and so we **speak** the truth in love—the love that is from God.

Editor’s Note: We are all learning the right combination of how to think, act, and feel in the various decisions we make. When we are learning to think, act, and feel the way God does, then we are learning the love of God and the lost will see that in us. Let them see that in you this week and help someone learn of that love by inviting them to read this article in *Arkansas Weekly*.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

If you want a copy of any, or all, of the lessons taught during our gospel meeting, give your name and request to David Halbrook.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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What Does Jesus Expect From Members of His Churches?

David Halbrook

The last point in the previous article (8-31-14), concerning what God expects of every Christian, was that they must find other Christians and work with them as a church. Some people, even Christians, doubt the necessity of that, but Revelation 2-3 is one among many passages which prove that the practice of Christians working together from place to place as one of His churches is God’s idea, not man’s and is expected, not just suggested. In those two chapters, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit speak to the churches (Rev. 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 29, 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22). These two chapters not only show that God expects Christians to work together as one of the churches of Christ, but with the words “I know you works,” Jesus shows that He expects certain things of each church and each person among each church (Rev. 2:1; 3:1). When churches do not meet His expectations, He notices and, unless there is repentance, rejects them (Rev. 2:5; 3:3). He also promises to judge every individual *according to your works* (Rev. 2:23)—which forces us to ask “What works does He expect of me, as a part of one of His churches?”. Let’s study. (Read *What Is Church Membership?* [8-24-14] to study what makes someone a part of a church of Christ. The present article focuses on what God expects of those who are members of a church).

Love one another... as brothers (1 Pet. 1:22; 3:8) Of course, loving the Father comes first but this then produces a love for His children (Matt. 22:37; 1 Jn. 2:15; 4:12). Remember that this love is focused mainly on how I think of them, not as much on how I feel about them. The way we feel about other people is not always completely a matter of choice but how I think about them always is. If I do not love every other fellow member then *I have a problem* and something in my mind needs to change (1 Jn. 4:7). I must avoid bitterness to avoid being defiled and learn to love those who are difficult to love, just as Jesus has (Heb. 12:15; Phili. 2:3-5). One way we show love is to *greet one another* (1 Cor. 16:2; 1 Pet. 5:14). When thousands of

saints assembled in Jerusalem, everyone could not greet everyone but everyone could greet *someone* (Acts 2:41, 42, 46a). This is among the simplest expressions of love. The normal, loving sibling relationship is a tutor to teach us of the love that God intends for Christians to have for each other (1 Pet. 3:8). This is especially important for Christians committed to working together for Christ. If this is absent, others will know. If this is present, others will know. Whether present or absent, God knows.

Give preference (submit) to each other (Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 5:5) Anytime we work with other humans, we will not always get our way. No humans always have the same opinions and preferences, so if they are going to cooperate (co- means “with”; -operate means “work”), they are going to have to go along with the ideas of others even if they aren’t emotionally preferred. Sadly, the way many Christians “cooperate” is by not “operating” when their preferences aren’t chosen. They think they’re helping everyone to get along because they don’t complain when they don’t get their way, but that is not “giving preference” or “submitting” as Paul and Peter taught us. When local decisions are made (date of a gospel meeting, times we assemble, which preacher is invited to come, etc), God instructs us to get over disappointment or pride when “our idea” was not the choice of the congregation and *participate with them* in what was chosen. Our commitment to Christ and each other keeps us working together even through occasions of frustration requiring me to give preference to others. Are you doing your share in this way that contributes to our growth (Eph. 4:16)?

Assemble with each other There are public aspects of our agreement to work together. Among them is assembling as a church (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 11:18). In the New Testament, saints always came together on the first day of the week, and saints sometimes assembled on other occasions, both routinely or on an “as needed” basis (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 2:46a; 6:2; 14:37). Any activity of the church, naturally involves every member of the church, in some way. When could “the church” meet but only part of the church be intended or involved? I fear that many Christians either have not thought this through or understand but ignore it. If you are a member here, then whatever “we” do, involves *you* according to your ability because you agreed to join us (2 Cor. 8:12). Does the church have Bible classes? Is the church having a gospel meeting? If so, and if you are a member, then that involves you---how could it not? The word *church* means *assembly*--if you are a member of the assembly (church), then assemble accordingly!

Be hospitable to (associate with) each other (1 Pet. 4:9) Our commitment to Christ and each other which makes us a church, also gives us duties (blessings!) that extend beyond the occasions we assemble. The assembly is just the most public of those

obligations and when that is the only way that someone is judged to be faithful or not, an incomplete judgment is being made. The brethren of Acts 2:46 not only assembled as a church, they also individually were together from house to house (hospitality). The commandment not to associate (keep company) with Christians who have been publicly identified as serving Satan, implies that while they were serving the Lord, brethren were associating with each other socially (1 Cor. 5:4-5, 10). The benefits of this are too many to list but easily understood with a little study and thought (Phil. 4:8).

Bearing with and forgiving (Col. 3:13) These two admonitions are not identical but often go together. Other people will annoy or frustrate us and often, they do not even know it (which probably means, we are doing the same to someone else). When the habits of others annoy us, we are obligated to overlook it and bear with them. When the actions of others toward us personally go beyond personal annoyance and violate God’s law, then God puts the responsibility on us to go to that person privately to resolve the problem (Matt. 18:15-17). Then we must look to Jesus who gave us a pattern to follow when forgiveness is needed (Eph. 4:32).

Use our gifts to serve each other (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:10) We all have abilities and strengths which we recognize and use to benefit ourselves and our families. By the Spirit, Paul and Peter tell us to find ways to use those abilities for the benefit of other Christians. Paul had the ability to make tents, and he used that ability to provide for himself and others who labored in the gospel (Acts 20:34). If I am the kind of person who has “never met a stranger,” then I likely find ways to use that ability to earn wages, and the gift of “gab,” used with wisdom, serves a variety of needs among the churches. Paul mentions teaching, leading, giving, and mercy as gifts that ought to be used, but this is not an exhaustive list of gifts. Our assemblies, individual needs, congregational decisions (both major and minor), etc. all require people to use what they have (physically, mentally, spiritually) for the benefit of their brethren. Joining other saints in the Lord’s work is a commitment not just of my time but of my talents. Forget what you “used to do but can’t do now” or how others can do ___ better than you. View what you have from God today as something He has given to you, so that you can serve others, especially those other saints who are also serving you in your labor together as a church.

Conclusion The local church is the most visible way to show the world what the church of Christ was and still is. With everyone doing their share, every congregation can grow according to God’s expectations. Do you know what God expects? Learn it, and then be a doer of the work.