

## 1 Peter 4:8-11 'Love: Brotherly Love Acts!'

In last week's message we looked at 1 Peter 4:4-8: 'They think it strange; and heavenly preparations'. 1 Peter 4:4: "They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into that same flood of dissipation and they heap abuse on you." I explained that when we are first saved, those who knew us before cannot understand why being Christian changes us so much. They cannot understand what it means to be brought from death to life. We look the same from the outside, but something inwardly has eternally changed! Though we continue to fail miserably at times (Romans 7:15-25) our inmost desire is not for self, but for the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus who saved us!

So the "flood of profligacy," that flood of abandoned immoral perverse behaviour which exists today, we see for what it is: an egregious offence in the sight of God. So we no longer "plunge" into it. And in so doing, we have "abuse heaped upon us." But v15 "they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." Yes, Jesus is "ready to judge," we await only one thing: for the last person for whom He died and arose, to be born and born again. And then the skies will peel back, the physical resurrection will take place and then as described in Matthew 25:31-46, the sheep will be separated from the goats and then eternal glory begins!

But yes, Jesus is "ready to judge the living and the dead." Revelation 22:7: "Behold I am coming soon." V6 we are "condemned by the world but live according to the spirit." V7 our heavenly preparations begin. "The end of all things is near. Be of sound mind and sober so you can pray." We must hold on to prayer, as being of deep importance, because it holds great weight in the sight of God! V8 "Above all, love one another because love covers a multitude of sin." It is not that our love covers over our own sin, as though it balances the scales of God's forgiveness. Instead it is that our shortcomings and failures toward one another are far more easily overlooked and forgiven, when we act out of genuine love for each other. We love and forgive, because Jesus has loved and forgiven us first!

And so we pick up the letter in 1 Peter 4:8-11 'Love: Brotherly Love Acts!'

In chapter 1:22 Peter wrote: "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart." In chapter 2:17: "Love the brotherhood of believers." Chapter 3:8: "Love as brothers." And chapter 4:8: "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sin," which we looked at last week and I have just recapped just now.

So he is reiterating this need for brotherly love. This instruction to "Love deeply from the heart" in chapter 1:22, and chapter 4:8 "Above all, love each other deeply." The new Testament Greek word "anupokpiton" in chapter 1 means unfeigned, real, sincere love. "Ektenes" in chapter 4 means intense, fervent, sincere love. Clearly friends, the word 'love' is not used by Peter as it is today. The word 'love' is bandied around today by our society with such little genuine meaning. It holds out as much sincerity as saying, 'Do you want fries with that?'

Biblical love is never about self. As you all know, biblical love is not simply a word, it's an action. Love *acts*. It has been said, 'don't *tell* me that you love me; *show* me that you do'. Talk is very cheap. Brotherly love, however, is never about thinking: 'What do I want out of this? What is it that I need? How can I assert myself? How can I show myself to be more superior? More mature? More

knowledgeable? Even perhaps, more Christian?' No, it is not about self; it is not about me, but about Christ in me!

Philippians 2:5-8: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross." Yes, "who being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped."

No, biblical love is not about us but Christ in us. And God's Love, Christ's Love, God the Holy Spirit's Love, is poured out into God's people and for His people. So when Peter speaks of "loving as brothers," and "loving deeply," "from the heart," with fervent love, with unfeigned love, with intense love, which sincere love that's real, he is implying that we are to consider God's Love for us in His Son, through His Spirit in all that we do and who we are. Yes consider what God has done for us through His Son and Spirit in every situation and then respond accordingly! V8: "Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins". V9: "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling."

In verse 10, we will see that Peter goes on to talk about all of us using those gifts that God has given us. And 'hospitality' is indeed one of those gifts of the heart, from God, the Holy Spirit. But friends if you are anything like me (if I'm being truly honest), I am happy when my visitors arrive, and yet I am also happy when they leave. But please, don't get me wrong: I am sincere when I say that I am happy when people come to my home. It is just I like my own space, and I guess that I'm kind of protective of it! But I do like having people around for fellowship and Bible study, although I wouldn't say that I am a naturally hospitable person.

Friends, we do need to think of this term of "hospitality" in the context of the ancient world in which Peter writes because "hospitality" there and then was far different, and it could come at a far greater cost than it does today! In many cultures then, and still today, it was not so much about those whom we know and love, but about the traveller or the stranger in town. The person who got stranded out late at night in a strange place with nowhere to go may well be in great danger. In some cultures if you are in a position to offer "hospitality" to someone and you fail to do so, this would be an insult to your household and your family. Even in a sense, a cultural stain upon your family name!

Let us also remember the context of the letter. Tremendous persecution had broken out against believers under Nero. So strangers who were brethren and were left out at night were in great danger. And they could also be a great danger themselves to anyone who would take them in!

So when Peter instructs them "to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling," without reluctance, without belly-aching, in light of "loving one another deeply, from the heart," this instruction does come with the potential of great cost. This took faith in God's sovereignty. Trusting that all things are in His Hands!

Yes abiding by this, and all of God's teaching does come at a cost. But indeed, even the murderous powers that be were in God's Hands. And they would walk by faith and not by sight in their love for one another, come what may! We are in your hands O Lord!

Yes, "hospitality" is a gift from God. But as with any gift from God, (not His gifts of Grace and Forgiveness through Jesus of course, but those gifts of the fruit of the Spirit for Godly living); yes, as

with any of those gifts there is blessing. And yet the blessing is not in the gift, but in the use of that gift within Christ's body in Christ's Name!

The writer of Hebrews exhorts us in chapter 13:12 to keep on "loving each other as brothers", (or remain in brotherly love) "do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." Now while never wanting to limit how God chooses to work, (and while also believing that He can still and does use angels in His work today, and that these verses can still be applied to us), it does seem clear, that this is referring to the visit of God and the two angels to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18, and perhaps also Lot in Sodom in Genesis 19.

In Genesis 18:1-8 we read: "The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, 'If I have found favour in your eyes, my Lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way, now that you have come to your servant'. 'Very well', they answered, 'Do as you say'. So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. 'Quick', he said, 'Get three sears of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread'. Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree."

Brothers and sisters, when looking at this text many years ago I pointed out that if Abraham had stayed in his tent and not pursued 'hospitality', which ministry and service, here, it seems that the Lord would have passed him by at this time! But before you object by saying, 'Hang on Roy, this was all part of God's Sovereign plan', and of course I agree, practically speaking. If he hadn't raced out of his tent this Providence from God for service, for ministry, would have passed him by at that time!

Dear friends, may I suggest that the Lord God doesn't shove Providence for service and ministry down our throats. Again, may I suggest that He places that Providence in front of us and inclines us toward Him. But we need to step out of our tent in faith and say with Isaiah in chapter 6:8: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am, I send me.'"

Now did God not know who He was going to send? Well of course He did. But he placed Providence in front of Isaiah for him to step forward. Yes, we must step out of our tent in faith. Out of our comfortable safe cosy life as it were, considering what God has done for us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit and say to Him in our hearts through prayer, "Here am I, O Lord, send me." From you dear friends, it may well be "hospitality" that he will use or is using for His Kingdom. You might want to have a small gathering at your home as an outreach once a month. Or a Bible study. Or a meal every now and then. It might be having fellowship lunch at your place once or twice a year. But whatever it is, if serving the Lord through "hospitality" is your desire and is indeed the gift that He has given you, you need to liberate that gift and use it for God's glory. Because love does Act! And using those gifts of the Holy Spirit is wherein the blessing lies.

Yes, "above all, love each other deeply"; "love the brothers"; "love deeply from the heart": with the intense, with fervent, with sincere, with unfeigned, with real love!

Verse 10 "each one should use whatever gift he has to serve others faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." Brothers and sisters, sadly, often when the Holy Spirit given gifts are spoken of, there is almost a kind of dismissive disdain about certain of those gifts, and even the

coveting of others. Gifts such as hospitality, generosity, mercy, discernment, wisdom, the fruits of which are gentleness, kindness, humility, joy, peace and patience to mention but a few, don't seem to be valued today. And do you know why? Because these things speak not of self-promotion, but of the evidences of a genuine relationship with God!

The church at Corinth was so worldly in its appetites and practises; so self-serving and self-promoting, so much so that Paul wrote that famous chapter 13 on love, even defining love. This chapter in reality, really needs to be read in the negative because those things were even apparently non-existent in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 12, after having spoken all about spiritual gifts in v31, Paul concludes "but eagerly desire the greater gifts." And it does seem that Paul is saying that we should espouse to, in effect, even be climbing the spiritual gifts ladder, so to speak.

But it's a bad translation and doesn't ring true in regard to brotherly love and selfless humility. Being like Christ! The better translation and rebuke by Paul is this: "But *you are* eagerly desiring the greater gifts."

Well it does seem, Beloved, that nothing has changed in 2000 years. Much of what we see which is falsely professed as Christianity is all about self-promotion and self-aggrandizing. And it speaks nothing of being like Christ and loving the brethren. Yes, "you are eagerly desiring the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way." In Greek it reads literally "and yet according to excellence a way to you I will show." Then in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 we read: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease, where there are tongues, they will be stilled, where there is knowledge, it will pass away".

And the crux of the whole matter we find in verse 13: "And now these three remain: Faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." But why is love the greatest? Because it is the only one which will remain in glory. "Faith and hope" will disappear with this life and this world because they will be fulfilled in heaven. There will be no need to have "faith," which is believing without seeing. And there will be no need to have "hope." Yes we will see what we had faith in and we will have what we hoped for. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit in all their glory will be revealed and only "Love" for all eternity will remain.

And dear friends in this world and this life *Love Acts*! Can you see? That "faith and hope" speak of our trust in and our personal relationship with God? And that "love" is our God inspired response of that relationship! Again, there is nothing of self-promotion here, because as God's love is poured into us through Jesus` pouring out of Himself, if we are truly His, we can't help but by responding to that "love," in the pouring out of ourselves for Him toward our brethren.

Yes, Love does Act. And we do this by using those gifts that the Holy Spirit has given us in our loving of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Peter calls it "faithfully administering God`s grace in its various forms." Or in other words, using all that we have and all that we are for His glory in our service to Him within Christ`s Body the church!

V11 "if anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God." Or "speaking the oracles of God," another translation says. Brothers and sisters, there is a great danger and a

blasphemous misuse of these words today. There are many throughout Christendom today who would declare that what these words mean is that when they speak, they are speaking the very words literally of God Himself. Not those “God breathed” words of the Bible, but in effect, the words that they speak, are even becoming the very words of God! So they believe that they can say within themselves with all the authority of God, ‘thus says the Lord!’ For example, Kenneth Copeland, who is the modern day father of the ‘Word of Faith’ movement, claims that we can claim the words and speak our reality into being. This movement teaches that if we speak something often enough, whatever that thing may be, so too will the realities of our spoken words and desires come into being, in the same way that God spoke and the universe came into being.

Does it sound too farfetched for me to say such things about someone? About anyone? Well, these are Kenneth Copeland's words, his own words during one of his so called sermons. Let me quote his own words, as I heard with my own ears: “When I read in Exodus 3:14 where God tells Moses to tell the Israelites that “I AM WHO I AM. Tell them that I AM has sent you”, when I read that God says “I AM,” I just smile to myself and I say, “I am too”!

Beloved, this is a doctrine straight from the pit of hell. And I have no doubt that in hell there is a place already prepared for K.C. and his sunshine band of heretics who speak such things, lest they repent of their out and out blasphemy!

So no, the text is not saying that when preachers preach or speak they are literally verbalising of their own making the very Words of God from their mouths. Even as in Roman Catholicism, the Pope is supposedly making new utterances of God whenever he issues the papal edict or decree or whatever it is called. On the contrary, Revelation 22:18-19: “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city which are described in this book.” And though this speaks specifically of the Book of Revelation, there is no doubt, that the whole of the counsel of God's Word is implied. So no, there are no more new revelations from God no matter what anyone says!

The commentator Calvin explains that what Peter is doing here is continuing to speak of those God given gifts, for the blessing and benefit of the brethren, loving the Body of Christ, while giving glory to God. Again, what is implied here is brotherly love, which is the opposite of self-promotion. No, when a preacher or teacher speaks in God's Name, they should only ever speak and expound upon his God the Holy Spirit “breathed word”. They should be seeking to nurture and feed the Brethren with the truth. Utilising those gifts which come from God but never seeking to rob Him of his honour and glory. Isaiah 42:8: “I am the Lord that is my Name. I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.” Isaiah 48:11 “For my own sake, for my own sake I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another!”

No, the goal is never about man's vanity but God's Glory and the feeding of Christ's Body the church! So they should only ever preach, they should only teach what has been plainly revealed in the Word of God or there are consequences! Ezekiel 13:1-9 “The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, prophecy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Say to those who prophecy out of their own imagination, “Hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. Your prophets, Israel, are like jackals among the ruins. You have not gone up to the breaks in the wall to repair it for the House of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the Lord. Their visions are false and their divinations a lie. They say, “The Lord declares”, when the Lord has not sent them, yet they expect

their words to be fulfilled. Have you not seen false visions and uttered lying divinations when you say, "The Lord declares", though I have not spoken? Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Because of your false words and lying visions, I am against you", declares the Sovereign Lord." My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will not belong to the council of my people or be listed in the records of the House of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I Am the Sovereign Lord."

No, not man's vanity and imaginations. Only God's revealed and "breathed out" Word!

Peter brings this section to a close in verse 11 saying, "If anyone serves (in whatever capacity) he should do it with the strength God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever Amen".

Clearly Beloved, all gifts, yes all Holy Spirit given gifts, are for the benefit and blessing and the serving of the Brethren, while giving all the glory to God! Because love, Brotherly love, Christian love dear friends Acts!

Let's pray!