

To the Saints of God at Topeka, Kansas September 20, 2015

Let all your things be done with charity (1 Cor. 16:14).

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity (2Pe 1:7).

I was going to talk about the church at Sardis, but the topic of charity and brotherly kindness amongst the brethren has been on my mind. That is, what are the spiritual aspects of this? What are the practical aspects of this? And, what does good look like?

The words “love” and “charity” in our everyday vernacular are overused, carelessly used, and completely misused from what the Bible meaning of these important, deep concepts is. They truly bear no connection to one another. My goal today is to begin to rescue their true Bible meaning from the abyss of societal misuse. You could preach ten sermons on this topic and only scratch the surface because this concept of true love is as deep as the Godhead.

In this society the word “love” is like the word “Smurf” in Smurf land. The word “smurf” is substituted for whatever noun, verb, adjective, or adverb you want. *The smurf village has been smurfed by a goatee, earring wearing smurf that smurfs smurfs.* “Love” is similarly used to mean many things such as friendliness (*isn't she lovely*), fondness (*I just love that pretzel dog*), desire (*I would love to eat that hot dog*), beauty (*doesn't she look lovely*), tenderness, passion, lust, sexual desire, sex acts, and dear, among other things. It is a dime store, greeting card word (literally) that is used from selling things, to hookups, to pulling at one's emotional heart strings and everything in between. For examples: puppy love, modern love, be my love, baby love, how deep is your love, make love, love triangle, love is a battlefield, love hangover, love story, love me like a rock, love hurts, all you need is love, and love stinks. This society's view of love is capsulized in the Beatles song: *All You Need is Love.*

*Love, love, love
Love, love, love
Love, love, love*

All you need is love
All you need is love (everybody)
All you need is love, love
Love is all you need
Gramps used to call this “sloppy agape.”

Don't buy this satanic lie. Like society does to everything else, they have reduced this beautiful, deep Bible concept, to a guttural, sensual, natural, filthy, devilish one that is completely different than the Godly spiritual notion of love. They have bastardized it to the extreme and then to top it off they have wrapped their blasphemous religion around it... “God loves everyone!” This means at its essence that God is pleased with whatever you decide to do with your free will and everyone gets a big fat happy sticker... everyone is all nice, all day... This societal use of “love” has zero relation to the Bible use of that beautiful word. It is Satan's ultimate secret weapon - the idea that there are no consequences in this life or the next for your actions (*ye shall not surely die*) and *you can be as gods* and do whatever your heart desires with impunity. He has been repackaging this same lie since the Garden of Eden.

Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life (Eze. 13:22).

When I started to write this sermon it was with the thought that we sometimes “fail” at brotherly kindness and charity. But, then I thought, what a wonderful opportunity – we can do better. Our last works can be better than our first. It is analogous to an elder that once said “*we fail at apologies because we include a ‘but’ in them and then justify our position.*” That is, we can improve our apologies and make them more heartfelt and sincere by leaving out the justification. It's exciting to think that the Lord showed us how to fix them. I do not actually think we “fail” at brotherly kindness and charity all the time, but I think it is something we have to work to keep it in front of us at all times to improve upon it. Since I was 16 and came here with the shirt on my back, I have been a walking poster child of the brotherly kindness and charity that each of you have had to me, not because you had to, not because it was the “in thing” to do, not because you felt sorry for me, but because of your true love for the King of the place. You simply thought of

it as your “reasonable service” with no strings attached. I hold each of you in a dear place in my heart. I am so blessed, and thankful to the Lord to be here. I think this is the most charitable place on earth, but we always have work to do. There is no ceiling on this topic. And, I remind you that a lack of brotherly kindness and charity was almost the undoing of the churches at Corinth and Ephesus (*they left their first love*, Rev. 2). So, we must be always diligent to pursue it, lest Satan get an advantage over us. This is a sword you never take out of your hand or drop. As soon as you drop your guard, Satan will strike your heart. I have no particular right to talk about this topic, I have sinned against each of you, sinned against the LORD in this area and not had brotherly kindness and charity toward you at times, but it is my fervent hope and prayer that I and we will do better and as we do better we forget the past. *...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 3:13-14).

From Faith to Gran, every member of this church has a non-delegable duty of brotherly kindness and charity, 24/7/365 every day of our lives to each other and to the LORD (*Let all your things be done with charity* - 1 Cor. 16:14). There are no exceptions and no exemptions. We cannot with impunity skate by and hope no one will notice that we do not have it. We cannot “trick” God into thinking we have something, when we do not, or that we are charitable, when deep in our heart we are uncharitable. *The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* (Isaiah 33:14)

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13).

The Webster’s definition of “charity” is: *“the act of giving money, food, or other kinds of help to people who are poor, sick, etc.”* Let’s just call it the “soup kitchen” definition. Is this what charity is in the New Testament? The unequivocal answer is “absolutely not” with 100% certainty. We know it is not because of 1 Cor. 13:3 *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* The soup kitchen definition is shallow and misses the true meaning.

*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness **brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity**. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor **unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2nd Pet. 1:5-8).*

So here are some broad definitions:

Brotherly Kindness:

- *A tender affection to all our fellow-Christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travelers to the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance, and therefore are to be loved with a pure heart fervently... as those who are peculiarly near and dear to us, in whom we take particular delight. Matthew Henry*
- *It is the peculiar love which Christians cherish and display towards each other as Christians. The affection originates in the possession of a peculiar mode of thinking and feeling produced in the mind by the Holy Ghost... They love one another in the truth for the truth's sake that dwelleth in them and shall be in them forever. ...It includes goodwill, benevolence (well-meaning and kindly) regard in its highest degree, it combines with them moral esteem... and tender sympathy. The brotherly love will be nurturing, sincere, fervent, kind, sympathetic, and tender-hearted. It includes forbearing and forgiving each other, assisting each other in their labor, promoting true happiness to each other, and even in reproof when necessary having a loving spirit. *The Christian under the influence of this principle will delight in his brother's Christian attainments and triumphs, as if theirs; he will never be ashamed of this brother, however low his place in society.* Adapted from John Brown.*
- *Strong's 5361 - love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love, in the NT the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren.*

Charity:

- *Charity, or a love of good-will to all mankind, must be added to the love of delight which we have for those who are the children of God. God has made of*

one blood all nations, and all the children of men are partakers of the same human nature, are all capable of the same mercies, and liable to the same afflictions, and therefore, though upon a spiritual account Christians are distinguished and dignified above those who are without Christ, yet are they to sympathize with others in their calamities, and relieve their necessities, and promote their welfare both in body and soul, as they have opportunity: thus must all believers in Christ evidence that they are the children of God, who is good to all, but is especially good to Israel. Matthew Henry

- *Charity is not alms giving (soup kitchen). Charity is love, and contradistinguished from brotherly kindness, describes the affection which Christians ought to cultivate and manifest toward their fellow-man, though they do not belong to the Christian brotherhood. Its leading element is good-will – a sincere and ardent wish for their true happiness, especially in the form of cordial commiseration - deep pity for the hazardous and miserable condition in which their guilt and depravity have placed them. This love is manifested in thinking of, and feeling towards, all men, as kindly as possible...and it worketh no ill to him. God does not and cannot love the world, as He loves His own. Christians do not, cannot, love the world as they love the brotherhood. John Brown*
- *Strong's 26 agape ag-ah'-pay – **love**, brotherly love, affection, good will, benevolence.*

Brother kindness and charity are so interconnected that in some ways the distinction may not be all that important.

Here is how one of our Elders defines charity. You see charity among the brethren when you see the Saints of God on earth, having, articulating (that is talking one to another daily), and living their intense and consuming spiritual affection toward each other... all grounded in their confidence that they will spend eternity knit together with each other's souls in joyous service to the King of Glory. In its essence, charity is a state of mind. Who would want to withhold their greatest affection from such an one?

Toward that end, please consider these blessed words:

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not (Malachi 3:16-18).

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Heb. 10:25).

Another elder defined charity as: *A true Christian spirit that will make us willing for Christ's sake, to undergo all sufferings to which we may be exposed in the way of duty.*

Charity toward all men is the understanding that we did nothing to get what we have and we have no right to look down our noses to others that do not have it. And, we must have charity towards all men, even those that profess to be our enemies. That said, we cannot in the name of charity give them a pass for their sins or curse God when he punishes them.

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins (1Pet 4:8). Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins. (Prov. 10:12).

“Above all things” speaks to its priority and prominence in the Christian spirit. It is the crowning grace, the *“bond of perfectness.”* This enhanced form of love must be mutual and reciprocal. It must perpetually be hot and fervent, and not lukewarm and indifferent. It must be consistent. What happens when love is not consistent? If love is not consistent then it is not reliable and it cannot be trusted, because you will never know at any time what you will get back. Inconsistent love is worthless. We are given consistent love from our Father so that should be our standard. In addition, charity and brotherly kindness must be consistent from one member to another without partiality and hypocrisy.

*But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the **fruit** of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (James 3:14-18).*

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. (James 2:9).

True charity (love) covers from the sight of all men a multitude (a great number) of sins toward one other. They are not raked or taken up, they are not improved upon or exaggerated. Instead, (love) truly and forever forgives those sins and buries them 12 feet underground and they are never given the light of day again. We all stand in need of forgiveness and no one wishes to be unforgiven. It is not enough for Christians not to bear malice, nor to have common respect for one another, they must intensely and fervently love each other.

When you cast your gaze and it lands on another member of the church you have internal movement in your heart – if that movement is anything other than *pure* affection then something is bad wrong. You have a duty to get after it and address it. It is a false doctrine to say “*some people just don’t get along.*” That is not how God defines brotherly kindness, love and charity.

*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. **And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness** (Col. 3:12-14).*

Charity (love) is the glue that unites and bonds us together in peace. It is as the ligaments by which the members of the body are united together. Without this, yet there is a sad incompleteness and a painful want of harmony and union between the church members. This is the rule of our whole life to keep this ever before our eyes. Beloved, we must stop and ask ourselves...what are we doing in

this life? If it does not include brotherly kindness, love and charity out of a pure heart then we are doing it wrong. The Lord Jesus Christ set the standard: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another* (John 13:35). Love begets love and it ever grows and increases, it doesn't wither away. In addition, the bond of perfectness can be broken by our ill treatment of the heathen every bit as much as the ill treatment of the brethren.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth (2Th 1:3).

*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; **but the greatest of these is charity*** (1Cor. 13:13). This is saying something when you consider these verses on the importance of faith.

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens (Heb. 11:33-34).

But without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb. 11:6).

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned (1Ti 1:5).

The Lord willing, I will discuss this with you more, next week.

I love you all. Amen.