

Brotherly Love

by Bryan Gibson

“But concerning **brotherly love** you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more” (1 Thess. 4:9-10).

One distinguishing feature of brotherly love is its purity. Read carefully: “Having **purified** your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a **pure heart**, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:22-23, ESV). Brotherly love is supposed to be pure, free from pollutants, free from anything that might taint this love. Here are some of those pollutants from which brotherly love should be free.

Free from hypocrisy. “Let love be without hypocrisy” (Romans 12:9). “Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

Free from reproach, just like our Father, “who gives to all liberally and without reproach” (James 1:5). Brethren receive enough reproach from the world (Luke 6:22); they should expect better from one another.

Free from selfishness, and so it gives “preference to one another” (Romans 12:10); it is “willing to yield” (James 3:17), willing to forgive (Matthew 18:21-35), and doesn’t seek anything in return (Luke 14:12-14).

Free from other fruits of selfishness, like bitterness and vengeance. “Let all bitterness...be put away from you” (Ephesians 4:31). “Love your wives and do not be bitter toward them” (Colossians 3:19). “Do not avenge yourselves...overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19, 21).

Free from envy, another product of selfishness (James 3:14, 16). “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:26). “Love...does not envy” (1 Corinthians 13:4).

Free from partiality. “But the wisdom that is from above is...without partiality” (James 3:17). “Do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ...with partiality” (James 2:1). Brotherly love shows love to all brothers, to “all the saints” (Philemon 1:5; Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4).

Free from attachment to this world, which means that brotherly love puts a premium on the welfare of each other’s souls. It will teach, comfort, and encourage; but it will also rebuke, warn, and admonish—all in the interest of helping brethren “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:12).

Sounds like we’ve all got some work to do, but we do know one brother whose love is perfectly pure, and that’s Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:11). Father, help us all to show that brother’s love.