



## “Let Brotherly Love Continue”

“Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also” (Heb. 13:1–3)

**A**FTER the Holy Spirit admonished the need for reverence because our God is a consuming fire, He then exhorts the continuation of *philadelphia*, or brotherly love. That brotherly love can wane is of course implied. If such could not end, then why admonish for it to continue?

The apostle Paul had encouraged this trait among the Romans:

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom. 12:10).

Brotherly love is not a competitive shutting down of another, but rather preferring another. Quite literally in Romans 12:10, the act of brotherly love is tied to an honorable leading or going before another. Hence, brotherly love works in concert with the concern of an example that one places before his/her brethren. Brotherly love cannot be at work in isolationism. “A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment” (Prov. 18:1). On the contrary, brotherly love seeks to promote godliness and happiness in the Christian community. Brotherly love seeks to bestow, rather than withhold, honor upon another. A church where all the members have brotherly love is a church that is sterile against the growth of cancerous vices such as gossip, slander, covetousness, envy, and selfish ambitions. This is no doubt a reason why the Holy Spirit commanded this grace to be added to godliness (see 2 Pet. 1:7).

When one turns and considers the text in Hebrews 13, brotherly love is manifestly seen. It is seen, for example, in generating hospitality to strangers (Heb. 13:2). Brotherly love is seen in remembering those brethren who were mistreated for righteousness and in a sense seeks to take upon or empathize with them by being chained with them (Heb. 13:3). Brotherly love recognizes the purity of the marriage relationship and guards against setting an improper example of adultery or fornication (Heb. 13:4). Make no mistake about it, adultery violates brotherly love (cf. 1 Thess. 4:6). Brotherly love pursues contentment and strays away from coveting your brother’s possessions (Heb. 13:5). Brotherly love is not fixated on self. It observes and appreciates those who “rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct” (Heb. 13:7). The disciple with brotherly love will esteem such laborers.

“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:12, 13).

Brotherly love is established by godliness and also promotes such the household of God.



—Steven J. Wallace