

Brotherly Love

BY B. G. ECHOLS

Conversion makes one part of a vast brotherhood which is bound together by ties stronger than flesh and most lasting than earthly considerations.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). Love of the brethren is the creation of the gospel. It is one of the natural outcomes of conversion. It was an amazing fact which astonished the first beholders, and it is just as amazing today when diverse elements of mankind are bound in brotherly love.

Brotherly love is possible, and greatly needed in times of severe trial. The expression "brotherly love" is characteristic of Peter's letters (3:8; 2 Pet. 1:7). There is no deserting of the brethren in difficulty since all are members of the same family (1 Pet. 1:17). "Unfeigned" means "genuine" or "without hypocrisy." It means to love sincerely like God Himself. Such cannot be done without a purified soul which can only come by obedience to the truth.

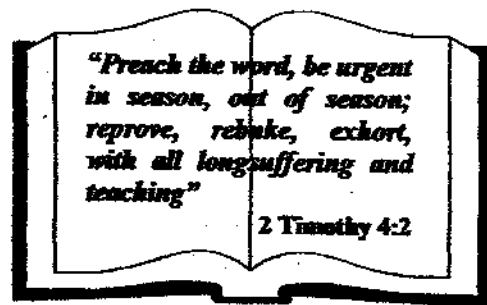
"Ye have purified your souls." That fact was taken for granted as automatic in becoming a Christian. They are now cleansed and are to remain pure. They had purified their souls. God forgives, but man must act. They were active in the process of purifying. The part they played

was obedience. In the long history of human aspiration, nothing has been harder for man to find than purity of heart. The reason is man's desire to find it by himself. It cannot be found without God. There is no holiness without guidance (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12). There is no purifying power in false doctrine. At the same time, no one is made pure without personal intention and effort (Acts 2:40). No one can expect to live a life any purer than the amount of effort he is willing to put into it.

Saving faith is in God Who is the source of salvation (1 Pet. 1:21). The word of God is the great instrument in a sinner's purification (Jn. 17:17). Truth is the substance of the gospel (Gal. 2:5, 14; Col. 1:5). Many hear the truth, but are never purified because they will not submit to it or obey it. God's intention in revealing Himself in the truth of Jesus Christ is that men obey that revelation. If that be not the clear intent of God, then much of the New Testament makes no sense whatsoever. Truth is intended to come into a person's life and character, and be active in molding, transforming, animating, and impelling him. Truth must be

obeyed (1 Pet. 2:8). God's revelation is not intended just to let us know. Its intent is that in knowing we shall do and be what He wants. Quoting it is not enough. Being sentimental about it is not enough. Act on it!

Love of the brethren comes from a purified heart. If we do not love, it must mean our heart is not purified. Love of brethren is evidence of being born again. God wants His people bound together in brotherly love. The road to unity goes through purity, and the road to purity goes through obedience. What keeps us apart are our impurities. "Fervently" means intensely, a stretching forth. Brotherly love takes effort. We must see to it ourselves.



"Preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"

2 Timothy 4:2