

<h1>LOVE</h1>  <h1>Friendship</h1>	Transliteration: Philia <small>(conversion from Greek to English)</small>	
	Pronunciation: fil-ee'-ah;	
	Strong's: 5373 – <i>philia</i> ; 5360 - <i>philadelphia</i>	
Definition: Philia means close friendship or brotherly love in Greek. It is one of the four types of love in the Bible – storge, eros, agape, and philia. Philia and other forms of this Greek noun are found throughout the New Testament. Christians are frequently exhorted to love their fellow Christians - <i>“Love one another with brotherly affection...”</i>		
This Week’s Sermon: "All in the Family"		
Scripture Focus: Romans 12:9-21; Proverbs 17:17; 18:24		

“One of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he (Jesus) answered them well, asked him ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12: 28-31 RSV)

In the answer Jesus gives to this insightful scribe's question, we have his listing of the priorities of life:

Number one is to begin with God. When we are troubled, when we do not know what to do first, when we feel we do not have enough resources to handle something, or are puzzled and bewildered, start with God and love him. **GOD LOVES US...GOD IS LOVE.**

When we start with God's love, then we are ready to turn to our particular challenges -- our relationship to our spouse, children, neighbor, friend, or boss. Then we are freed to love our neighbor as ourselves. The same process that reached us and won a response from us, we are now to pass on to somebody else. We can show them the same love that we ourselves have received. Our response to God's love makes it possible to *“Love one another with brotherly affection.”* (Romans 12: 10 RSV)

Ever wonder why it says “brotherly” affection? Some of us who remember back in the days when we lived with our brothers (and sisters) in the home may wonder where the affection was. Yet what this is saying is that we who are members of the body of Christ should love one another with the affection of those who live in the same household together, having learned to live closely together with mutual respect. We can’t have affection for someone with whom we are closely bound, in terms of living together or ties of relationship, without it being based upon mutual regard for each other’s welfare, property, and so on. Brothers and sisters learn affection only when they are willing to do so on the basis

of a mutual respect for each other. When Christians love, they are to love this way: Showing regard for someone else, “outdo[ing] one another in showing honor” {Rom 12:10 RSV}, asking the other one to step first, to have the preferred seat, the preferred honor, the preferred place. This is having a due regard for the welfare and the importance of someone else. That is genuine love – just simply courtesy – and it’s something that is greatly lacking today.

What is terribly missing in all too many churches today is the experience of "body life"--that warm fellowship of Christian with Christian which the New Testament calls “koinonia”, and which was an essential part of early Christianity. The New Testament lays heavy emphasis upon the need for Christians to know each other, closely and intimately enough to be able to bear one another's burdens, confess faults one to another, encourage, exhort, and admonish one another; and minister to one another with the Word, song, and prayer.

In 2 Peter 1: 3-7, Peter states that Jesus has “given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” These are to assist us to “participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason make every effort to add to your faith (here Peter goes through those attributes leading to)... and in your godliness, brotherly kindness.”(v7a) Peter is not referring to a duty here, rather he is speaking of the God-given ability to meet brothers and sisters from every nation, tribe and culture and express spiritual kindness toward them. The apostle had earlier encouraged his readers in 1 Peter 1: 22, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart for you have been born again." The Holy Spirit enables us to express brotherly kindness to one another and to fellowship together because we are a family, a spiritual body, needing the experience of "body life." In his book, *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote,

“It is easily forgotten that the fellowship of Christian brethren is a gift of grace, a gift of the kingdom of God that any day may be taken from us, that the time that still separates us from utter loneliness may be brief indeed. Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in communion with Christian brethren.”

" . . . and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love.”(v7b) Here Peter is referring to the God-given ability to express self-sacrificial love toward the world and toward our spiritual family. I John 3:16-18 gives a very clear definition of this kind of love:

“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need yet closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with speech, but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18 RSV)”

So....What is love...? It is heartfelt affection toward God and man. It is active good will toward everyone. Where we lack heartfelt affection and active good will, we need to acknowledge this deficiency (as an indication of our spiritual immaturity). We need to be willing to relearn love. To do this, we need to look to the Father, to Jesus, to the apostles, and to other Christians. Take the initiative to practice active good will, and heartfelt affection will develop naturally. Perhaps we now more fully appreciate why Paul wrote in regards to faith, hope, and love in 1 Corinthians 13: 13.

"THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE"