

BROTHERLY LOVE—IS IT ALWAYS EASY?

By Keith Greer

In the past couple of years I have been involved in some discussions with brethren with whom I have doctrinal disagreements. Open discussion, I believed, is always the way to get to the heart of what divides us. So I thought.

How do you apply the passages concerning "brotherly love" with those you are not in fellowship with? Personally speaking, my understanding concerning brotherly love makes no difference if we are in agreement scripturally. My duty is the same, whether we agree scripturally or not.

"Let brotherly love continue." {Hebrews 13:1}

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart," {1 Peter 1:22}

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" {1 John 4:20}

From my understanding, we hate the teaching which is contrary to God's word, not the teacher. This must be our attitude whenever entering into discussions with brethren with whom we differ.

To the best of my ability I have tried to follow this God given principle. Yet, making application is not always that easy. Allow me to explain.

One of these discussions has been over an eighteen month period. Recently, the other preacher in these discussions called them off. Why? "He believed that the lack of objectivity has made these discussions futile". On who's part? According to his thinking or ours!

I answered his letter and pointed out some things he seemed to have "missed". How can one be accused of lacking "objectivity" if what he presents is never answered?

Our discussions were over unity and fellowship. I asked continually about discussing 1,2, and 3 John. No response. In one meeting I presented materials on Romans 14. No response to what I said. Two other preachers gave a series of lessons on Bible unity and fellowship. Not one word in response to these sermons and their teaching. Who is lacking "objectivity"?

Much time was wasted over areas on which we do not have disagreement. Did we recognize them as our brethren? Certainly we did. Yet, on more than one occasion this accusation was made and we addressed it. In this preacher's letter he still made this charge! How many times do you have to explain yourself?

What they do not understand is a simple matter of scripture. We can be brethren while not being in fellowship. How?

"Does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. " {2 John 9-11}

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. "{1 John 1:7}

" ... Let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. "{Philippians 3: 16}

If we are in fellowship with God, then we are in fellowship with each other. Simple, isn't it? Understanding is not difficult – it's the application that gets us! ***