

WCCC 1995

Brother Kaung

Brotherly Love (4)

John 13: 34 – 35. ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all know that you are disciples of mine, if you have love among yourselves.’

I John 4: 11 – 12, 20 – 21. ‘Beloved, if God has so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time: if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.....If anyone say, I love God and hate his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he that loves God love also his brother.’

Let us bow down and pray:

Lord, we really praise and thank You, because You love us and have given Yourself for us. We thank You that, before Your table, You fully reveal to us how much You love us. We thank You that through Your Spirit, You have filled us with Your love. Today, we can say we love You, for You have loved us first. Here, we can share on brotherly love, because You have placed this love in us. We praise and thank You, for You are the fountain of love. We also praise and thank You, because You deserve all our love. We entrust this time in Your hands. We look to Your Holy Spirit to quicken us with Your word in the heart of every one of us, so that we not only hear it but also see it from inside. Lord, every word of Yours is with power. Your word will not be said in vain. We look to You, Lord, to accomplish Your word in us, so that You may find Your testimony on this earth and that You may gain all glory. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We thank our Lord, for He has led us in the past few days. By this final session, I believe we all know what our theme is. The theme this time is ‘Brotherly Love.’ Probably you may be wondering why in the past few days I did not touch on brotherly love. Brothers and sisters, in my heart I feel that love among brothers are not just words. Love among brothers have to come out from life. Today, we can talk about brotherly love. But, is this how we walk in real life? We consider brotherly love too common, as something we can do ourselves.

We thank God that, when we come to this last session, we can now talk about brotherly love.

We have seen that there is no such love in us. We have seen that the source of this love is in God. God is love. If we are not born of Him, definitely there is no such love in us. We cannot love God. We cannot love our brothers. But we thank God, for he who has this love is born of God, and he knows God. We thank God; it is He who puts this love in us. He also gives us the commandment that we shall love Him and also love our brothers. He can accomplish for us what we cannot do. Therefore, today, we can love our God, not that we love Him, but that He loved us first. He loves us and puts His love in us, so that we can love Him with His love.

We already mentioned that it is not pleasing to God if our love for Him does not come from Him. When our Lord told us to love Him, that kind of love is AGAPE, which is His very love. Oftentimes, we love God with our natural love. As a result, not only it does not please God but also it has caused God a lot of trouble. In our experience as Christians who love God, we must learn to put this natural love under the cross. We cannot be our Lord's disciples if we do not love Him more than we love our father, mother, wife, son or daughter, brother or sister, and even our own lives. We have natural love for our father, mother, wife, son or daughter, brother or sister and our own lives. We often love God with this natural love. But the Lord has shown us that this love has to be put to death before we can love Him with the love He has given us.

This love that God has given us is what the Bible calls 'the first love'. In terms of time, this is the love we had when we first believed in Him and became saved. In terms of essence, this is supernatural love, which is the love of God. Then we can love God as He loves us. In the same principle because we have this love, then we are able to love our brothers and sisters. When the Bible instructs us to love one another, that love is not the natural love. It is still the supernatural, holy love. Therefore, we thank God. Only God is love. There is no love aside from God. We also thank God that, because of His mercy, He has given birth to us and put this love in us. We also thank God that because He loves us in this way, we can also love Him. Now we can love one another.

On that night when our Lord had His last gathering with His disciples, according to John 13: 1, 'Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, loved them to the end.' 'To the end' does not merely refer to the element

of time, meaning that, once He loves us, He will love us to the end of time. In the original wording, it also means that, in all things, He loves us to the end. He loves us to the extent that, in every circumstance and in every condition, He loves us and brings us to the end. He knows that His Father has already given Him all things. This is the Father's will in eternity. Because He was facing the cross and was to accomplish the work of redemption, God had given Him all things.

On that night, at the moment when everybody had been seated, He rose up, took off His garment, girded Himself with a towel, put water in the basin, and started washing the feet of His disciples. I believe all brothers and sisters know this story. We know that, according to the custom of the Jews at that time, when the guests came to the house for dinner, at the door there would be a housemaid who would wash their feet. At that time, there was no paved roads. All the roads were covered with dust. Also, people did not wear leather shoes as we do today. They all wore sandals. When people came to the house, their feet would be covered with dust. So the first thing to do was to have their feet washed. Once the feet were washed, the whole body would be refreshed. If the feet were not clean, the whole body would not feel comfortable, and one could hardly enjoy the meal. Also, at that time, people did not put their feet under the table when they sat down at the dinner table. If the feet were under the table, things would be all right. But at that time, people reclined at the dinner table when they ate. All their feet would show. If the feet were not washed, they would not look good. When the Lord told the disciples to prepare for the feast, the host immediately opened up his house. He also prepared everything needed, including water, basins and towels. But amazingly, there was no housemaid. I believe that the host had not overlooked the matter. I believe the Lord may have told him to do so deliberately.

When the disciples entered the house, they were looking for a maid to wash their feet. But there was no one. They felt very uncomfortable. But no one thought of washing other's feet. So, they came to the dinner table with their dusty feet. I believe the Lord was watching them, to see what they would do. Remember, when they came in, what did they do? There arose a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be the greatest. At the dinner table, there should of course be a seating arrangement. I believe the Lord did not put place cards with the names of the disciples on the table. He might have purposely let the disciples chose their own seats. Then they started disputing to see who among them was the greatest. The greatest would then take the most honored seat. They not only had not thought of washing other's feet, but they might also be hoping that some others would wash their feet. No one would yield; no one would do the washing.

When the Lord saw the situation, how did He feel? The disciples had followed the Lord more than three years. Yet, to this point of time, they had not learned to love one another. So the Lord rose up. God had already given Him all things, and He was about to go to His Father. He did this one last thing for His disciples, the last ministry. He humbled Himself to the position of a little maid and started washing the feet of His disciples. After He washed their feet, He asked them whether they understood what He was doing. He said, 'You call Me teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. But I washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.' (ref. John 13: 13 – 14).

Brothers and sisters, the Lord washed the feet of His disciples. This act, deemed from the outside, was to make them feel comfortable and allow them to enjoy the feast. Yet, inside, the Lord was washing their spirit so that they could enter into a normal spirit.

What did the Lord mean when He said, 'If I washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet'? He also added, 'I give you a new commandment. You shall love one another.' To love one another is not a matter of words for our lips. It has to come out in deeds and in truth. So the first time when the Lord told them to love one another, He took action accordingly to show them that loving one another is not a matter of words. It is a matter of action and truth.

When we come to I John 2: 7 – 8, we read, 'Beloved, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard. Again, I write a new commandment to you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light already shines.' In John chapter 13, we read the Lord gave His disciples a new commandment. Then we come to I John where John said what he wrote to them was not a new commandment; it was the word that they have heard from the beginning. What is the word that they have had from the beginning? It refers to the word mentioned in chapter 1, that is, the word of life which he shared in fellowship with them. This word from the beginning is not only a word but also a commandment. It is also a person. It is not only a word, or a commandment but also this one, who is our Lord Jesus. This is what we heard from the beginning, which is also what we have received from the beginning.

When we received our Lord, we received His love. Because of this love from Him, then we love Him. Then we love our brothers. This is very natural, supernaturally natural. (I often like to use these words: supernaturally natural, because this does not come from the natural, but the supernatural. However, although it is supernatural, it is very natural. This is very clear). The day we believe in our Lord, no one has to remind us that we shall love our God. Very naturally, we love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our understanding, and with all our strength. This is our first love towards Him. This is a commandment.

But we do not have to do this commandment by force; we do it naturally. For we have been filled with His love. After we believe in the Lord, when we come across another Christian, although we have not met him before, we love him from within. Even before we know him, as soon as we realize that he is a believer, immediately there is in us a love towards him. This is because the Lord is in us. In the same way our Lord loves His Father, He is causing us from within to love the Father. In the same way the Lord loves those who belong to Him, His love in us causes us to love our brothers and sisters.

Therefore, in fact, this is an old commandment. The day we believe in our Lord, we already receive this commandment. We may not have the knowledge, but we already have the reality. However, John said that this is also a new commandment. The word 'new' here is not the same as the antonym of 'old'. In the Greek, there are two different words for 'new'. One of them is the antonym of 'old'. The other refers to freshness. Here, the new commandment means 'a fresh commandment'. Although this is an old commandment, yet this commandment never becomes aged. The commandment is always fresh. So, it is a new commandment.

This is true for the Lord. When He was on this earth, He loved His Father throughout His life. He loves us throughout His life. Therefore, this is also true to us. Because the darkness is fading; true light is already shining. The true light is God Himself. God is light. He already shines upon us. In His light, all the darkness fades away. And more and more we receive this light. When we are shone upon again and again, the darkness in us begins to fade away. So, here we are told that this brotherly love not only came to us from the beginning, but also this love grows every day. More and more we enter into this brotherly love. At the beginning, indeed we loved. However, there may still be some darkness in us. We could not see. But when the light of God shines upon us, we begin to love our brothers deeper and more truly.

The Lord said, 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. As I love you, so shall you love one another.' (ref. John 13: 34). This indeed is a new commandment. When we turn to the Old Testament, we know the summary of the law and the prophets, which is also the greatest commandment, is to love God with all heart, with all soul, with all understanding, and with all strength. The second is likewise, that you shall love your neighbor as yourself. But when the Lord spoke to His disciples, He told them to love one another. This is a new commandment.

Why is the commandment a new one? First, in the Old Testament, it was to love your neighbor as yourself. Neighbors are those who live in your neighborhood. Neighbors are an external relationship. Because he lives near you, you ought to love him. Actually, when you love your neighbor, you also gain the benefit. This relationship is external. But the Lord said, 'You shall love one another.' This is among brothers. 'Brothers' is a matter of inside. Whether he lives in your neighborhood or far away, your relationship with him is internal. This is an internal relationship. Therefore, this is a new commandment.

Secondly, the Lord said, 'You shall love one another, even as I love you, you shall love one another.' In the Old Testament, to love your neighbor is to love them as yourself. If someone can love his neighbor as he loves himself, he must be very good. We know that lawyer was not able to do this. The young ruler was not able to do this. Even if you are able to, at most you would love your neighbor as yourself. The standard of this love is yourself. But now we have this new commandment. The Lord said, 'As I love you, so shall you love one another.' The standard is totally different. The standard is not yours nor mine. The standard is the Lord's. How the Lord loves us, that is how we shall love one another. Oftentimes, we think we already love our brothers enough. We use ourselves to be the measure. We think we already love our brothers with all our might. But indeed, we have fallen short of it greatly. For the Lord said, 'How I love you, you shall love one another in the same way.' To love one another is without limit, just as our Lord loves us infinitely.

Thirdly, this is a new commandment because the old commandment is a law. Law is for you to keep. This new commandment is also to be kept. The Lord said, 'If you love Me, keep My commandment.' This commandment is to love your brothers. However, we can only rely on the Lord's grace, not ourselves, in order to keep this commandment. We cannot keep it on our own. Who is able to love his brothers as the Lord loves us? If we cannot keep the commandment of the law in the Old Testament time, and since the commandment the Lord gives us now is far beyond that in the Old Testament time, how can we keep it? But,

thank God. It is His own love in us that enables us. It is His grace in us so that we can keep His commandments. So, this is a new commandment.

There is a basis for us to love our brothers. The first basis is God's love. God loves us; not that we love Him, but He loves us first. We have experienced His love. Secondly, when we experience God's love, we start to love God. With this love for God, we can talk about loving brothers. If we are not touched by God's love, or if we do not love God, we are not able to love one another. These are the basis of love. Therefore, it is not until this last session that we talk about brotherly love.

How do we love one another? Let us look at it first from the negative side. 'He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness until now. He that loves his brother abides in light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.' (I John 2: 9 – 10). '.....not as Cain was of the wicked one, and slew his brother, and on account of what slew he him? Because his works were wicked, and those of his brother righteous.' (I John 3: 12).

It is quite amazing. When John talked about brotherly love, he also mentioned this incident of hating one's brothers. As you may know, there are many pairs of contraries in I John. One of these is love and hatred. God's commandment is for us to love our brothers. Yet, on the other side, there is another thing called hating brothers. It sounds impossible for one to hate his brothers. How can we hate our brothers? We are brothers to each other. We are all members (of the body). We can only love one another. We cannot hate each other. It should be impossible to hate one's brother. But regrettably, we actually see that it is a common thing. Among God's children, hatred is prevailing.

You may ask: when and where have I hated my brother? If you do not forgive your brother, you actually hate him. Once, Peter came to the Lord, asking, 'My brother has sinned against me. Every time he sinned against me; I forgave him. But he has sinned against me seven times already, do I still have to forgive him? Is not this quite enough?' But the Lord said, 'I am not saying seven times. I am saying seventy times seven.'

Brothers and sisters, among God's children today, there is this spirit of not forgiving. When your brother or sister sins against you, although you do not

fight back just as in the Old Testament, you say to yourself, 'Because we are brothers, there is nothing I can do. Forget it.' But you cannot forget. You cannot forgive him. There seems to be nothing outside, but inside of you, you cannot let it go. Because of this, many problems have been caused in the church. Then brothers and sisters cannot be one. We begin to live a life of falsehood. We cannot treat each other as if there is no obstacle. We cannot be transparent inside. Our fellowship with one another become blocked. We do not know how much death has been brought into the church because of this.

Peter went to the Lord, saying, 'My brother sinned against me.' Who was Peter's brother? It was Andrew. From reading the Bible, we can sense that these two brothers had very different dispositions. Peter was an extrovert; he was straightforward. He often spoke without thinking. You know this kind of person can easily offend people. His brother Andrew was a very caring and careful person. One time, there was thousands of people gathering together. The Lord said, 'Feed them.' Andrew was able to spot a little boy in the crowd who had two fish and five loaves of bread. Being such a person, Andrew would hardly be someone who offended people often. I think it is more likely that Peter was the one who had sinned against his brother. But he thought that Andrew had offended him. We are often like that. When we say, 'I forgive you', we think we are great. But after the seventh time, we would not forgive anymore.

Dear brothers and sisters, even if your brother is wrong, you have to think how much you owe the Lord. The Lord has forgiven all. No matter how much your brother has offended you, it is surely much less than what you owe the Lord. How can I not forgive my brother? The Lord said, 'If you cannot forgive your brother from your heart', He will not forgive you. Not to forgive your brother is to hate your brother. You live in darkness. You do not know which way to go. Your spiritual condition is in death. Dear brothers and sisters, should we not ask our Lord to shine upon us?

The other aspect of hating one's brother is because of jealousy. Whenever you are jealous of a brother, you actually hate him. Cain hated Abel, because he saw that what Abel offered was pleasing to God, but his offering was rejected. He was jealous of his brother. He hated his brother, so he killed him.

Brothers and sisters, do we harbor any jealousy towards our brothers? When we see our brothers and sisters receive much more grace, or gifts, or they have greater achievements, or even when they are better off than we, do we harbor any jealousy in our hearts towards them? If you are jealous of your brother, it

is like hating him. You wish that he would have less grace or gifts, or that he was less successful. If he gets into trouble, then you would be happy. This is hating brothers. When we witnessed brothers and sisters being blessed by the Lord and used by Him, we should praise and thank our Lord, even though we are not like them. We thank God because He has blessed our brothers and sisters. We praise Him for He is using them. This is love.

Thirdly, if we ignore our brothers and sisters, it is also like hating them. I John 3: 16 – 17 reads, ‘Hereby we have known love, because He has laid down His life for us; and we ought for the brethren lay down our lives. But whoso may have the world’s substance, and see his brother having need, and shut up his bowels from him, how abides the love of God in him?’ These words follow what precede in the same chapter. For example, verse 15: ‘Everyone that hates his brother is a murderer.’

We hate our brothers and sisters if we ignore them when they are in need, either spiritually and materially, or close our hearts against theirs, suppressing our love. When we see a brother in spiritual need, our love towards brothers will naturally rise up in our hearts. We then want to help and serve him. We cannot possibly care less about him. When you see a brother or a sister has material need, you naturally feel that you must help him or her. This is brotherly love. This is supernaturally natural love. However, if you see such a need, yet you suppress this love, it is like hating him. Oftentimes, this is our problem. The Holy Spirit in us kindles this love. We feel that we need to love our brothers. But we suppress that love. This is hating our brothers.

Furthermore, if we despise our brother, this is also hating him. James 2: 2 – 3 tells of such a situation. Someone comes to the assembly dressed in fine clothes; then you invite him to sit in an honored place. Another man comes in dirty rags, and you say to him, ‘You stand over there, or sit down by my feet.’ When you look down on your brothers like this, you are hating them. Actually, to hate is not to love. If you do not love when you should love, that is to hate your brother. May God have mercy on us. Negatively speaking, we cannot hate our brothers. May God deliver us from this sin, so that our hearts be enlarge and filled with the love of God.

Also, negatively speaking, the Bible shows us another point. ‘Children, let us not love with words, nor with tongue, but in deed and in truth.’ (I John 3: 18). Is it not true that we often have this kind of trouble? Not only this is our way to behave towards our God, it is also our way to behave towards our brothers and

sisters. Oftentimes, we say, 'God, we love You. We love You.' But do we really love Him? Do we obey His commandments? We do not. We love Him only with words and tongue. This is also how we treat our brothers. We say to them, 'I love you. I love you. I love you.' Oftentimes, I even think it would be better if we say less of that. For love is not on our lips, or with our words.

I am not saying you cannot say so. We should say to God, 'God, I love You.' But, behind it, there has to be action and reality. You keep His commandments and do His will. You walk in truth. Then, when you say, 'God, I love You,' His heart will be touched. If not so, you can say these words thousands of times, God will not be moved. The same principle applies in our love for our brothers. I am not saying that we cannot say, 'Brother, I love you.' We should say so. I often think, because of our Chinese tradition, we seldom express our love in this way. This is not right. But, when we say it with words, we need to have deeds to support it. It should be in truth.

These are the negative aspects. Let us turn to the positive side. On the positive side, what I would like to share focuses on I Corinthians 13. But we do not have much time left. Let us look at it quickly.

I Corinthians 13 is a chapter of love, but it is in a special context. It is between chapters 12 and 14. If it is taken out of context and read by itself, then there will be problems. But, if it is read between chapters 12 and 14, then it is very proper. Chapter 12 talks about the body. Some said this chapter is about gifts. Actually, it is not so. It talks about the body. Chapter 14 is about the operation of the members of the body. In between is this chapter of love. This love applies to brotherly love.

How can we love brothers? 'Love has long patience.' (I Corinthians 13: 4). In the original Greek, it is said more bluntly, 'Love is long-suffering.' When we come among brothers and sisters, we think it is like home, sweet home. We think it is a place for enjoyment. We suffer much in the world. Then, we come to the church to enjoy. But we have to see that, among brothers in the body, in the church, the first expression of love is long suffering. Why? For we are members of the body. We are connected together, so close to one another. For this reason, we cannot avoid having friction among us. Sometimes, you hit me, and sometimes I kick you. It cannot be avoided. Not only it cannot be avoided, but it abounds. What do you do when you are in such a situation? Do you come to a point when you say, 'I have suffered enough. I want to leave.' But you are a

member of the body. You cannot leave. What can you do? If you do not have the will to suffer long, you will not be able to stand it. This is love.

Very often when you eat too fast and your teeth bite your tongue, would your tongue say to your teeth, 'Next time if you bite me again, I will leave'? It is long-suffering, and to suffer willingly. Brothers and sisters may bother you a lot. But the love of the Lord is in you, to enable you to endure and suffer without limit. Not only this, but love is kind too. (ref. I Corinthians 13: 4).

Love is kind. What does this mean? You accept from brothers unlimited sufferings, but you return with kindness and grace. This is the love of the Lord. When the spear pierced the Lord's sides, outpoured blood and water. The blood atoned for our sins; water gave us life. Every wound that the Lord received from us says to us, 'I love you.' This is brotherly love. Of course there are many other things. I can only ask you brothers and sisters to read for yourselves. May the Lord enlighten us so that we can indeed love one another.

If we truly love one another like this, what would be the result? The Bible says, 'If you love one another, we pass out from death to life.' This phrase is used only two times in the Bible. The other time is in John 5: 24. '...he that hears My word, and believes Him that has sent Me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life.' Likewise, if we love our brothers, we pass out of death into life.

If we love one another, the Lord said, 'You are My disciples.' Do we want to be His disciples? Or, do we just want Him to be our Savior, so that we can just gain something and that would be enough? We have no heart to follow Him and to be His disciples, so that He can conform us into His image. But if we have this will and love one another, then we are truly His disciples.

If we love one another, we dwell in God, and God abides in us too. Then we are one with our Lord. As He is, so shall we be on earth. Then fear is taken away from us, for in love there is no fear. When we see the days ahead and think of the day when we see Him face to face, even when there is the judgment seat of Christ, we have no fear. For, as He is, so shall we be.

If we love one another, the world will see God. No one has ever seen God. But, as brothers love one another, the world shall see the Lord. What is the testimony of the early church? The world pointed to them saying, 'Look. These people love one another.' In these last days, the Lord is coming. Brothers and sisters, is not this the time for us to return to brotherly love? How I wish that among brothers and sisters, there are no biting and no strife, and that we love one another and can be of one heart, so that in these last hours, we may give a beautiful testimony. May the Lord have mercy on us.

Let us bow down and pray:

Our Lord, we really feel ashamed of ourselves. The way we love You is so shallow. Our love to our brothers is so incomplete. So many times, we have put Your name to shame on the earth. So often we do not love our brothers enough. We really feel we have shortchanged You. We come to You and thank You. You remind us once again. We look to the Holy Spirit to pour down the love of God among us once again, so that we may rise up and love You and love our brothers. May praises, honor and glory be to You. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.