

## “Because We Love The Brethren”

*"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (I John 3:14).*

There is always a sweet spirit as the men show up for “Alive at Five.” That is the time we have met for early morning prayer for about eighteen years. This morning something special happened that I don’t want to “get over.” As I heard the prayer for one of our brethren who will be moving to another state, I was blessed. The prayer was not about how much we will miss them (although it was in the discourse); it was about God’s blessing upon them as they go. Then one of our brothers in Christ was asking the Lord to bless his business, that it needed some help. Then he shifted gears as he asked the Lord to bless the business of a man who was within twenty feet of him. The brother said, “Lord, I know they are our competition, but bless their jobs and them as well.” This brother had to leave early, but the man he was praying for, who was at the prayer meeting said to me, “We are not just in competition, our businesses are in-line, direct competition.” Then he said lovingly, “I wanted to get up while he was praying for us and go hug him, right then...but I knew he was down in his back and I didn’t want to hurt him.”

John, the beloved said, *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren..."* (I John 3:14). What a fellowship, what a blessing to pastor a church full of this kind of love! The kind of love that would pray, “Lord, bless my brother, even if it would hurt me, bless him.” In this competitive world we live in, what an oasis in the desert!

### **I. The chief motivating force behind brotherly love is Calvary!**

Nothing makes me want to serve the Lord and love the brethren more than when I consider Calvary. When I think of the pain Christ went through, the suffering, the torment and the forsaking of His heavenly father so that we might be free, makes me ask, “What, Lord, can I do to express my appreciation?” We hear His clarion call from above, *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"* (I John 3:16).

### **II. A permanent and lasting gift we give is the gift of brotherly love.**

A beggar was on the street and approached a man traveling in his direction and the beggar asked, “Friend, can you give me something that might sustain me?” The man clasped the beggar’s hands together between his hands and said, “Oh, brother, forgive me; I have nothing to give you.” Then the needy man burst into a smile and said, “You have given me so much more than you understand. You called me brother.” That old beggar was more blessed to be called a brother, than if he had given him material possessions. *"Let brotherly love continue"* (Hebrews 13:1).

### **III. Some of life’s most cherished memories will be the responsible actions of brotherly love.**

The second oldest brother in my father’s family was a kind, gentle man named Hobart. My father landed in the middle and he served as a pretty good commentator on the actions of the oldest and the youngest. Dad would often remind us in the early days of the Great Depression, it was Hobart that hitched up the horses, put all the kids in the wagon, and no matter what the weather, made sure that everybody got to church when the circuit riding preacher was in the community. Dad told me it was Hobart that made sure Dad was faithful to Sunday School. Hobart was a quiet man, handsome, yet unassuming. He was never known as a lady’s man, although he could have been if he had so chosen. He was faithfully getting the kids to where they needed to be. Oh, how they made their mark! Aunt Emma Leah was the community “Scarlet O’Hara” - the toast of their society, yet Hobart held her to the remembrance of her faith, and no matter how far she went she always came back to her roots. Uncle Wyatt and my dad were the musicians and even after they performed on the radio, Hobart was there to remind them to always seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. As my Uncle Charles became one of the great heroes of the D-Day invasion, nearly losing his life, it was the faith that Hobart

transferred which held him through. Uncle Phillip broke the state record for the mile in high school and only recently was he beaten. He was the football and boxing star and probably the most popular in Upshur County with his Hollywood looks and natural athletic talent. I am willing to venture, however, it was Hobart who held his feet to the fire spiritually, so much so that Phillip ended up a fine preacher of the Gospel. Even the older kids, like Uncle Wallace, a very godly layman and Aunt Jewel Oline, who to this day has a reputation of being one of the finest school teachers that ever taught in all of East Texas until her young and untimely death...even they held high esteem upon the testimony of Hobart. Aunt Nina, the baby of the family, spoke almost reverently of Hobart. During World War II, Uncle Hobart saw some heavy action. The tender hearted big guy, became broken hearted at the sight of the pain inflicted upon other people. He was one of those guys who never talked about what he did or saw. He faithfully fought and served, but when he came back home to Big Sandy, he moved in with his widowed mother and took care of her the best he could. He had no social life. He became a recluse. The only time he would come out of his shell was when loved ones came over and even then it was awkward. How he loved the kids. As a matter of fact, the older we got the more distant he became. It was as though he came back from the war and decided he would be a child for the rest of his life. He was still there for us. He'd take us to town for a Baby Ruth and RC. He took us to Big Sandy Creek where we laughed, played and swam the day away. I can still see his big broad shoulders to buoy us up in the water. I can see his nearly toothless grin that no one outside of us ever saw. Then, as we would dry out on the shore, he became intense as Daddy would explain a Bible passage.

One of the great honors of my life was to say a few words over his casket at his funeral. There he was, overalls and all in the casket! The quiet man that we thought only his family knew...but as I looked around, I saw people I didn't know, that evidently he impacted as well as us. He never married. In Dad's last dying days, he reminded me. "Son, it was Hobart that kept us in church as kids; I'll never forget what he did for me." As the Pope preachers lined up at his grave and the teachers gathered around, we took our hats off to the man who exemplified the word *brother*. One of life's unsung heroes who lay down his life for his people. I know his kid brother's boy won't forget!

The church is full of Hobart's and if you are reading these words, on behalf of the congregations that love you, we say thank you! Thank you for being all that you are and helping us to be what we are supposed to be. "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13).

- Pastor Pope -

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