

Love For All the Saints

by Bryan Gibson

Philemon wasn't partial—he loved **all** the saints (Philemon 1:5). And he didn't just feel it; he demonstrated it—"for we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother" (Philemon 1:7).

Other Christians in the New Testament were commended for the same thing: "...after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your **love for all the saints**, do not cease to give thanks for you..." (Ephesians 1:15-16). "We give thanks...since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your **love for all the saints**" (Colossians 1:3-4). "...for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward **all the brethren** who are in all Macedonia..." (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10).

Clearly, then, this is a point of emphasis in the New Testament. Do good to all the saints (Galatians 6:9-10)—not just family members, not just friends, and not just those you perceive to be the strongest.

Here, then, are some ways you can show love to all the saints in your local congregation.

Nothing wrong with sitting in the same pew or chair at every worship service, but don't talk to the same people every time. Before and after worship services, move around and talk to different people. Get to know everyone. They need you, and you need them (Romans 1:12).

Don't think, though, that this can all be accomplished at the place you meet for worship. After all, you are there primarily to worship God. Invite people into your home; in fact, make it your aim to have everyone in the congregation at some time or another. You'll get to know them a whole lot better in your home than you will at services. It's awful hard to "warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak" (1 Thessalonians 5:14) when you don't even know who they are. Hospitality is a wonderful way to fill the needs of your brethren (and them fill yours), not to mention that it's a command (1 Peter 4:9).

Visit those saints who don't have as much contact with their brethren—the sick, the shut-ins, the elderly, etc. (Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:27). That's not the preacher's job or the elders' job; it's yours. These folks have special needs, and unless you have a real good excuse, it's your responsibility to fill them.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). Don't be envious when good things happen to your brethren; instead, let them know just how happy you are for them. And in bad times, sympathize with them. Let them know you're there for them, that you'll do anything in your power to help them.

Use all the means you have at your fingertips to encourage all the saints—get well cards, phone, email, Facebook, etc. Just don't convince yourself that this is the best way, because in most cases, nothing beats the opportunity to "speak face to face" (3 John 1:14).

Commend your brethren on a job well done. Such commendations are found throughout the New Testament, so don't ever question their effectiveness. Again, don't be partial; include men, women, and children in these commendations. Folks who excel spiritually need to be commended so that they "do not grow weary while doing good" (Galatians 6:9).

"And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you" (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).