

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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OBLIGATIONS IN AND OUT OF THE CHURCH

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Peter exhorted brethren to “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood...” (I Peter 2:17). These short sentences remind us that we have obligations towards all people, Christian and non-Christian alike.

To honor someone, we place a value upon that person. We should esteem all mankind with value because they stand out uniquely in all creation, being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). God has given man dominion over the fish, birds and beasts (Genesis 1:28). God indeed “crownest him with glory and honor” (Psalms 8:5), and therefore we are obligated to acknowledge this in our dealings with every human being.

We must look deeper than the dirty clothes and unkept hair seeing the human being, and then honor the down and out person with courtesy and justice (James 2:2-6). We must not let the abominable actions of the homosexual cause us to lose sight of the person created in the image of God. We must honor him or her as such, even as we speak out in condemnation of his or her

sinful actions (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27, I Timothy 1:10, I Corinthians 6:9, etc.). Making a distinction between men and their circumstances and works is a necessary obligation upon us all. Doing good to all men will be easier if we first *honor all men*.

Peter also notes that we have an obligation to our brethren in Christ. The command to “*love the brotherhood*” crosses local church ties and embraces Christians everywhere. All Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ because we have all been begotten through the Gospel, and in Christ, share a common faith (I Corinthians 4:15, Colossians 1:2, Jude 3).

While there is no scriptural organization outside of the local church, there is fellowship outside of the local church. For example, Gaius showed love to “brethren” who were “strangers” (3 John 5-6). By setting these brethren on their way in preaching the gospel, Gaius could be a “fellow-worker for the truth” (3 John 8). Gaius had fellowship in the truth with brethren outside his local congregation, by manifesting love towards them in the form of

hospitality.

Paul did not want his brethren, wherever they were, to be ignorant of stabilizing and comforting truth. To his fellow Christians in Thessalonica he writes, “But we would not have you ignorant brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest who have no hope” (I Thessalonians 4:13). Paul wanted his brethren in another locality to be comforted with the knowledge of the truth that in the resurrection those who have died in the Lord will not miss out on the glorious coming of the Lord, for they will rise first (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

When we are aware of brethren, regardless of where they are, being ignorant of some truth revealed in the Gospel, does not love for their souls and for truth demand that we try to share the illuminating truth with them? Surely we can show such love for the brotherhood, without being accused of trying to run the brotherhood. Let us remain faithful, and never fail our brethren wherever they are in the world (cf. I Peter 5:9).