

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

A MOST DIVINE SANDWICH

Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. 1Peter 2:17

No one is quite certain when or where the practice of putting meat, cheese, or some other filling between two slices of bread, to make a convenient and portable meal, first occurred. Popular lore tells us that the practice was so much loved by the Earl of Sandwich (1718-1792) that his name is now used in the English language to describe this type of meal preparation which is practiced by virtually all cultures in one form or another and known by various names.

Bread is a very important part of any sandwich, yet there is no such thing as a bread sandwich since a sandwich is known, desired, and described by whatever filling is between the bread. While we cannot make a sandwich without bread, it is nonetheless one of the least important parts of the sandwich though quite vital to it.

Peter sets forth before us a scripture which is in some measure like a sandwich. The word "honor" occurs at the beginning and the end of the verse. While the instruction to "honor" "all men" and the "king" are very important, that which is in between is the meat of this "sandwich", insofar as the degree of importance to the children of GOD.

The word "honor" means to pay respect to or give the just due to the one being honored. Since we are born into the human race as a privilege, we have a certain obligation to have respect unto our fellow man. We cannot and must not disregard his freedom to be what GOD designed him to be nor do we have the right to take any possession from him which belongs to him. We may not agree with his principles or even his religion but we have no right to dishonor him as a human being as a result. Since we have nothing that we have not received we do not even have the right to wish evil upon men who mistreat us or hate us.

The LORD reminds us of this when HE says, *"Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."*(Luke 6:28) This is exactly what Paul tells the Romans, *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."* (Rom 12:17-21)

Peter goes on to use the same word "honor" in describing our regard of the earthly government which the LORD is pleased to put us under. He describes the unjust, which are marked out for destruction, in this fashion, *"But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord."* (2Pet 2:10-11)

Because of the innate, sinful nature of men it is necessary that we be put under "governments" of one kind or another. While we may not agree with those in places of leadership, we have no right to show disdain and disrespect of the institution of government or even the office which they

might occupy, since our own sin has brought about the necessity of such matters. We are fortunate to be under a "government" which is (ostensibly) a servant to those who are governed.

While we might see great abuses of power exercised by those who are our elected representatives, we must still show respect unto the offices which they might occupy and if we feel compelled to unseat them we must go about it in a "lawful" manner lest we be found to dishonor "the king". While political activism can be carried out "lawfully" by those who are the children of GOD, we have a more noble calling as the sons of the most HIGH GOD. Between the slices of "honor" is the meat of this sandwich which we are called to feast upon.

Peter says, "Love the brotherhood". This is the height of the calling of the sons of GOD as we dwell upon the earth. There is no higher aim (in this world) among those who are the disciples of CHRIST than to love one another. In fact the LORD says that it is impossible for a man to truthfully say that he loves GOD if he does not demonstrate love to his brother in CHRIST. (see I John 4:20; James 2:16) *"And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."* (1John 4:21)

This "love" which must exist among those who are *"heirs together of the grace of life"* (I Pet. 3:7) far exceeds the concept of the "honor" which is to be shown to all men, even as the meat of a sandwich exceeds the bread which surrounds it. This love of the brotherhood is founded upon the very principle of the unity of the GODHEAD. The LORD JESUS prayed, *"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* (John 17:21) This is exactly what HE told the disciples, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (John 13:35)

This "love" is manifested as we *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."* (Phil 2:3) This causes the children of GOD to *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another."* (Rom 12:10) and brings about the desire to *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."* (Gal 6:2)

It is impossible that we should know every man who is one of the elect heirs of grace in this world, even as it is impossible to gaze upon the pages of the LAMB's book of life and read their names written there. Yet in the mercy of GOD, HE has called HIS people together in local assemblies where the chief and sole desire of those gathered is to see the name of CHRIST exalted. It is here in these "assemblies", alone, that this "love of the brotherhood" can be and is fully demonstrated in the caring relationships of those so privileged to be a part.

This is one of the reasons we are exhorted to *"hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."* (Heb 10:23-25) To forsake that assembling is to show extreme disregard for those to whom we are united in CHRIST, our ELDER BROTHER, who presides there.

Then Peter says, *"Fear GOD"* which is the basis upon which all of the relations of the children of GOD to others rests. The man who does not fear GOD will have no regard to HIS truth nor will he love those for whom CHRIST shed HIS precious blood. A GOD fearing man is one who treasures HIS word and those whom the LORD calls HIS own.

How sweet, how heavenly is the sight, When those that love the Lord,
In one another's peace delight, And so fulfil his word!
When each can feel his brother's sigh, And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye, And joy from heart to heart.
When free from envy, scorn, and pride, Our wishes all above,
Each can his brother's failings hide, And show a brother's love.
Love is the golden chain that binds The happy souls above;
And he's an heir of heaven that finds His bosom glow with love.

#1082 Gadsby's Hymns by Joseph Swain

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