

Hebrews 13:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let brotherly love continue.

Analysis

Let brotherly love continue. This simple command opens chapter 13's practical exhortations. 'Brotherly love' (philadelphia, φιλαδελφία) specifically denotes affection between Christians as family members in God's household. 'Continue' (menetō, μένω, 'let it remain' or 'abide') assumes this love already exists but calls for its persistence. Under persecution, maintaining unity and mutual affection faces severe testing as believers may blame one another, compete for resources, or isolate for self-protection.

The command's brevity emphasizes its foundational importance. Jesus declared that love for fellow disciples would mark His followers (John 13:34-35). Paul taught that love fulfills the law (Romans 13:8-10). John wrote that love for brothers evidences genuine salvation (1 John 3:14). Brotherly love isn't optional sentiment but essential evidence of regeneration and basic Christian duty.

This challenges individualistic Christianity that prioritizes personal relationship with God while neglecting church community. True faith produces love for God's people. Theological orthodoxy without brotherly love indicates dead faith (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Reformed theology emphasizes that while salvation is individual, sanctification occurs in community. We need brothers and sisters to challenge, encourage, rebuke, and support us. Brotherly love creates environment where mutual ministry flourishes and believers mature together toward Christlikeness.

Historical Context

Early Christian communities faced severe external pressure from both Jewish and Roman persecution, creating temptation toward isolation for safety or internal division from stress. Hebrews repeatedly emphasizes community: gathering together (10:25), considering one another (10:24), mutual oversight (12:15). First-century house churches depended on members sharing resources, hosting gatherings despite danger, and supporting one another through trials. Maintaining brotherly love under such conditions required supernatural grace. The command to continue this love assumes it existed but needed reinforcement given increasing persecution. Church history shows that strong mutual love enabled Christian communities to endure and even flourish under severe opposition.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does persecution or trial affect your brotherly love—does hardship increase unity or create division and resentment?
2. In what practical ways are you actively loving fellow believers as family members, not just friendly acquaintances?
3. What obstacles hinder brotherly love's continuation in your church community, and how can you help overcome them?

Interlinear Text

Ἡ	φιλαδελφία	μενέτω
G3588	brotherly love	Let
	G5360	G3306

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 3:8 (Love): Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

1 Peter 1:22 (Love): Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

2 Peter 1:7 (Love): And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

1 Peter 2:17 (Love): Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Hebrews 10:24 (Love): And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

2 Thessalonians 1:3 (Love): We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

Galatians 5:22 (Love): But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

1 Peter 4:8 (Love): And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Galatians 5:13 (Love): For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.