

Christian bonds and unity (Quality: Good)

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's help, I direct your attention this evening to the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 13 and verse 11.

The second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 13 and verse 11. Finally, brethren, farewell.

Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace.

And the God of love and peace shall be with you. My mind has rested upon these words at the opening of this text.

[1 : 08] Finally, brethren, farewell. There lies in these words from the lips of the Apostle Paul, much divine teaching.

We know that his heart was in these words as he wrote them to the church at Corinth. He labored amongst all the churches and traveled from church to church, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, Rome, and many more churches he traveled amongst.

And he speaks here in this epistle of the things that lay upon him, he said, beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

And here he revealed somewhat of his care over the church at Corinth.

And this is not with his dear servant, a mere formality, as he concluded this letter which he had written from Philippi to the church at Corinth.

[2 : 37] Here we see his affection. Here we see his concern. Here we see his exercise of heart to see the work of God's Spirit manifest.

That he does not use mere formal words. He is speaking the truth out of his own heart. These words have rested upon our mind and our heart is set this evening upon speaking a little of the first word, brethren.

And then to go on to speak of his word, farewell. Well, and when we come to look in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 15 and verse 29, we see these words spoken so clearly in one of the letters there.

At the end of that letter, in the verse 29, we have these words, Fare ye well. Fare ye well. It gives us a very clear understanding of the meaning of this word.

When the Apostle said, farewell. It was not just goodbye. It was a spiritual desire that it would go well with them.

[4 : 02] That it would be well when called to die. That it would be well here in this world below. And that they would fare well in the day of judgment when they stood before the throne of God.

That they would be found on the right hand of the throne of God. Fare ye well. Fare ye well.

Be perfect. This is what he meant when he said, fare ye well. Be of good comfort. Be of one mind. Live in peace.

And the God of love and peace shall be with you. And finally, there comes that beautiful benediction. This is what he meant when he said, fare ye well.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God. And the communion of the Holy Spirit. Be with you.

[5 : 27] This was his desire for the church of Corinth. And we would desire to look this evening into the meaning of this word.

Fare ye well. So let us, as the Lord may help us, this evening come to this. Finally, brethren.

If we were looking to have an indication of what the apostle meant by brethren, then we have it in the opening chapter that we read to you this evening.

How beautifully. He speaks there of a brother. The very opening verse. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. By the will of God.

And Timothy. Our brother. He described him in other ways as his son in the faith. But he was a brother in Christ.

[6 : 31] And what a beautiful word this is. And what lies beneath it. A holy, sacred, eternal bond and union that will never be broken between God's dear children here in this world.

We have many figures that are used again and again in the scripture to speak of this blessed union.

Mine goes to that beautiful book, the Song of Solomon and the Bride and the Bride group. To the apostle Paul's writing when he speaks of for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife and they too shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery. I speak concerning Christ and his church. The sacred union of the church. And then we read in that lovely word in the epistle here to the church of Corinth.

Come ye out from among them. Be ye separate. Touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and ye shall be my sons and daughters. Saith the Lord God Almighty.

[7 : 53] What a relationship is spoken of here. The beauty of the creation ordinance of marriage until death has to do part.

A bond never to be broken. Only in death. And oh what a figure the Lord took up of Christ and his church.

The bride and the bridegroom. When we come to see the figure of the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty you know our children are ours.

they are given to us by God. They are the gift of God. But peculiarly in the order of creation they have but one mother and one father.

And that bond is never broken. Only in death. But still there is always that which remains even when our dear parents are in eternity they are ours.

[9 : 14] No other father or mother. A blessed bond and union. A figure of the eternal bond and union of Christ his dear church.

Ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord God Almighty. And here we have this beautiful figure of brethren in the bonds of the everlasting gospel.

people. Oh what a figure it is. The sweet union and communion between the saints of God here in this earth spoken of in the book of Malachi and they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.

They communed together on the things of God and they were brothers in the church of God.

Sisters in the church of God. Mothers in Israel in the church of God. As the apostle went on to speak of another figure not many fathers in Christ he said.

[10 : 30] And the bond transcends all ages. Well do I remember as a student at university the Lord began with me and called me out of the world to follow him in obedience.

in the church where I was at the time I found a dear mother in Israel a prayerful soul.

She'd never been married never had any children of her own. And when I was there with my dear friend John Rayner oh what a dear mother in Israel we found in Elizabeth Mary Parker she was 75 at the time but a prayerful godly woman and oh the union we felt to her in the things of God in the bonds of the everlasting gospel and she was not the only mother in Israel in my life.

Oh how she warned and advised us and prayerfully followed our footsteps welcomed us into our home into her home and we were blessed in her companionship and her company.

Oh what do you know of mothers in Israel why in the churches in the years gone by the Lord favoured his churches with dear godly women and godly men in the churches oh how they watched over the young prayerfully prayed for them carried them no children of their own but they carried the immortal souls for years of those whom the Lord had laid in their hearts what a blessed figure here we have then as the apostle speaks of that union that bond that tie in the bonds of the everlasting gospel and I would say this this bond transcends natural tie we have those who are our blood brothers and our blood sisters but we may not have the union with them even though they're naturally ours that we have with the living family of

[13 : 21] God as we meet them and feel sweet union and communion with them I have come here to the states as a complete stranger and I can say truthfully to you here tonight as I have moved from Chateau to Sheboygan to Grand Rapids I have watched where when I have felt that sweet union in my heart it would be quite invidious to say where it was but I know it I shall take the precious nature of it back with me to UK I shall indeed there have been bonds formed here often unspoken which will abide ties which will ever remain a union which cannot be broken a sweetness and a savour which will ever abide in my spirit and I was training in the teaching profession in UK

I had to go to Worthing a small town on the south coast for ten weeks there was a nurseryman there who ran a nursery where he grew wallflowers and cucumbers quite a prosperous little business he was a deacon at the church he was a man of very very few words I saw him and met him once in ten weeks he shook hands silently at the church door where he was deacon but do you know I felt he was a brother in Christ I felt a deep love and affection to him he was a man of such few words but I never passed through that town now without I think of him he's been gone to glory many many years but I loved him as I left that town it has been a bond which has never been broken he was a humble godly follower of the lamb and my heart's affections went out to him in a sweet union and fellowship in the gospel when we come to look at this word that the apostle speaks finally brethren he's with them now they worship before the throne of god there is a glorious clarity here the church militant and the church triumphant are one in Christ they're utterly undivided they're gone before husband and wife in the bonds of the eternal gospel brethren in Christ are utterly undivided by death cannot separate them the apostle had such a sight of it what shall separate us from the love of

Christ there was his answer I am persuaded that neither life nor death nor angels nor principalities and he goes on through that sacred catalogue shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord and it is this blessed love that binds the saints of God here below they feel a tie and a union one with the other they have walked out the same step they have heard the voice of the same master they have known the same heavenly command but I would say this it is a solemn solemn solemn warning David and Hithophel they walk together to be counseled out of God but they are separated in eternity David and Saul were both kings of

Israel they are solemnly separated in eternity but there was there in that court a union which has never been broken and that is the union between David and Jonathan glorious union sweet union oh what a union that was we have known that union and those dear beloved brothers have gone to glory now but there is no breach no separation no division still one in Christ finally brethren how indefinable is that sweet union the apostle knew it with

Timothy oh how he knew they were different in age in generation what a remarkable thing it is when young and old meet together I look back in my youth to my dear godly grandfather I lived in awe of him he was a godly man I would never have dared to say anything spiritual in his presence anything about my own heart because I was certain he would have instantly searched out the reality of it but you know there came a day towards the end of his life I believe it was two or three years of his end when I went with him to hear a servant of Christ preach and it touched my heart and the text was a very blessed text it was this

[20 : 10] I am he that liveth and was dead and behold I'm alive forevermore and have the keys of hell and of death and you know I drove my grandfather home after that service and I opened my mouth for the first time on the spiritual things in his hearing and I said to him grandpa he was helped tonight wasn't he and he looked at me and he said yes he was and that's all he said but there was a bond between us and I didn't know what he thought or what he felt but after I'd come before the church and been baptized and he was gone to his grave before that happened an elderly member of our church came up to me and said your grandfather said you'd come oh the bond between young and old blessed living union in the body of

Christ it is the very foundation here of that union in the church oh the sacred nature of it it is divine it is the work of God sweetly blending together in the hearts of his dear people and then to come to this second word of our text fare ye well finally brethren fare ye well this sweet word was the desire of the apostle it's peculiarly expressed in the benediction that is here but before we come to speak of the blessed nature of this benediction we would look at the remaining part of our text fare ye well the apostle's desire was that they might be kept here below be perfect be of good comfort be of one mind live in peace and the

God of love and peace shall be with you I would look at this word here be perfect I do not believe it means be sinless oh if we looked at it in another light I believe it would lead us in this direction that we be brought to lean utterly completely totally independent upon our God to be as nothing in his dear hand to seek earnestly the best gift to seek what we have preached to you over the days we've been here that glorious robe of his righteousness what do you think the apostle had in mind when he was speaking here of perfection

I believe this he was not thinking of sinless perfection that erroneous doctrine which John Wesley propagated but he was thinking here that beautiful verse of top lady nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I came my hope my only hope in thee oh God be merciful to me and when we speak here of the apostle fare ye well be of good comfort where's the comfort oh I believe that it's in the Holy Spirit the comforter it is to be brought to find our only peace and comfort in the Lord Jesus Christ himself there is no other comfort in life

I have known in my life some stormy seas solemn tempest where has been my comfort in those tempests exactly where this apostle's comfort was when he said there stood beside me this night an angel of God whose I am and whom I serve all he knew his comfort was in the presence of his God we've spoken of the three men in the fire where was their comfort in the presence of their redeemer when Daniel was in the lion's den where was his comfort when Jeremiah sank in deep mire where was his comfort when Jonah was in the belly of the well where was his comfort in good comfort it is to be looking unto Jesus and seeking that comfort which comes from the Holy Spirit of truth the comforter in our heart it is to know a triune

[26 : 00] God and then we come to these words fare ye well beautiful words be of one mind precious experience to be of one mind one mind because we have been taught by the same spirit of truth one mind because we have known the same revelation of Christ one mind because we have been brought down under the sovereignty of God and have been made as little children oh what a blessed grace this is to be nothing and to be of one mind it is a sweet moment in the church when poor trembling sinners come before the church of Christ brought by God the Holy

Spirit under divine commandment to obey his voice and follow him in the ordinance of the church and as they come to speak before the church of Christ and the members of the body of Christ listen to their confession they have one mind they understand it the poorer it is the lower that confession comes the more union they feel they do indeed do you think that's true they're not there to hear a glowing account of their experience they're here to feel a precious union with a brother a tempted tried brother in Christ and here is the members of the body of Christ sweetly blending together there is never a more precious time in this earth and the Lord looks down the Lord hearkened and heard what have you missed why have you not come what is standing in your way what pride is in your heart to think that you must bring something that is acceptable oh to come in your poverty and your need you will find

I tell you this that the brethren are of one mind they are indeed ages no barrier in these times and the mountains shall depart oh they will the Lord will fade them as child one mind beautiful expression here fare ye well oh how the dear apostle desired that they would walk in this sweet pathway and then this live in peace and the God of love and peace shall be with you let us look at this word clearly let us come close to this word live in peace you know I see that to be this live in the peace of God which passes all understanding it's not a natural peace it is a peace in the heart through the peace speaking blood of Jesus

Christ washing away the sin of your soul and bringing you to be at peace with the living family of God it is that peace which the angels declared over the hills of Bethlehem on earth peace Christ my peace I give unto you my peace I leave with you not as the world giveth give I unto you in the world ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world fare ye well live in peace in the peace of Christ in your heart and when you know that peace in your soul in its richness you will feel able to follow him in sweet obedience his heavenly commandment you will indeed and the

God of peace beautiful word the God of love and peace shall be with you and how will you know that ah you will know it you will walk in the light of his countenance and you will know his love in your soul in the sweet savour of it the even writer says this love of my God to him again with love intense I burn chosen of thee ere time began I choose thee in return the God of love and peace oh I ask you here tonight dear friend answer before him you know his love don't you you have felt it you have walked in peace you have known that comfort in your own heart this precious peace oh what a sacred path this is fare ye well oh when the saints of

[32 : 16] God farewell here below they walk in the presence of this God of love and peace his everlasting love beautifully expressed to Jeremiah I know the thoughts that I think towards you thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end has the Lord dropped that peace into your soul answer before him and now we come to the benediction for here the dear servant of God as he labored over the church of Corinth he came to this beautiful benediction as he said fare ye well and then he comes to this sweet truth the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all Amen this was his desire for them oh look at it the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ oh what have you known of it in your soul I remember well listening to my father preach back at St.

Hampton in New Cove I remember listening to him preach on the blood of Christ I was young the Lord had begun with me but I groaned under his ministry in this respect I said Lord I know nothing of what he is preaching about I never experienced it the blood of Christ in my heart I knew he had but you know I walked out of that chapel I hadn't gone a few yards from the chapel when the Lord spoke and it was this every grace and every favor comes to us through Jesus blood I had a hope I had known what it had been to have a hearing ear I had known what it had been to have a few answers to prayer I had known what it had been to have been broken down in godly sorrow before him and I had such a sight that night that

I could have had no grace of Christ unless his precious blood had been shed for me there have been times when the Lord has led me more deeply into the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ one of those times I have referred to here since I have been preaching here when in Holland in 1961 in the home of a dear godly Dutch elder the Lord sweetly blessed me with the realization of his redeeming love and blood redeemed with Jesus blood redeemed his beauty is called to Christ and oh to know more and more of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ his mercy his love is known in the application of his atoning blood in our heart the apostle sweetly refers to it in Romans when he says by whom that is

God ye have now received the atonement that is Christ by whom ye have now received the atonement oh what do you know of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ you will see as you may have noticed that every time I pronounce the benediction I cannot add anything to it I use this benediction as one of the most simple straightforward blessed benedictions in the scripture it is so simple be with you all oh it is my desire that you may know the grace grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in your heart his love and mercy to you in your soul giving you to know his rich atonement reconciliation between your soul and your

[37 : 01] God the healing of that breach grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God or what do you know of it beautifully spoken to the Lord servant Jeremiah when he said to him yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee there is nothing in this world to compare with the love of God shared abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit have you ever tasted it the hymn writer says this love divine all love excelling and it does indeed and we see it in those dear brethren

David and Jonathan their love and union excelled they said the love of women it was love in the sacred bonds of the eternal gospel unbroken now for they worship him before the throne in glory one eternal ineffable union in heaven bound in that bundle of everlasting life with Christ and finally this word and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all oh dear friends what do you know of that sweet communion of the

Holy Spirit as a beautiful hymn our blessed redeemer ere he breathed his tender last farewell a guide a comforter bequeath with us to dwell oh that sacred communion the Holy Spirit speaks not of himself but he brings the church of God into communion sacred holy communion with father and son and into the blessed bond of the everlasting covenant as Christ spoke of it in his prayer at the end of the last supper they all may be one I in them and thou in me that they may be one in us oh the communion of saints that is spoken of here in this word brethren and the communion with a triune

God that is known here below finally brethren farewell we do not know whether we shall ever meet again but this we know that if under the mighty hand of this triune God we are brought together in the bonds of the covenant here in love and union to know him whom to know his life eternal then we shall not be separated in eternity to come finally brethren farewell amen I sorry to