

## SERMON V.

*“ Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”*—PSALM CXXXIII. 1.

In this short Psalm we may see the excellency of the saint’s communion, fellowship, and brotherly agreement.

It is described and commended.

First, Described from the fountain of it, from God as a Father, and therefore he says, “ How good and how pleasant it is for brethren.”

Secondly, Described, also, from the act and exercise thereof, which is, “ to dwell together in unity.”

Thirdly, It is commended from the goodness, and profitableness, and pleasantness of it. It is a good thing, a profitable thing for brethren to dwell together in unity; behold how good it is in the eyes of men; behold how pleasant it is beyond expression “ for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

And the goodness and pleasantness of it is expressed by two similitudes. It is compared to the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron: verse 2, “ It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that run down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garment.”

It is compared, also, to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: verse 3, “ As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.” &c. Thus, you see, the design of this Psalm is to declare the goodness and profitableness of unity between brethren, from whence, then, I take up this observation:

That a loving agreement between the saints, among themselves, is exceeding pleasant and very profitable.

Some things are pleasant but not profitable, and some things are profitable and not pleasant, as physic, &c.; but communion and fellowship, and a loving agreement among the saints is both pleasant and profitable.

It is a pleasant thing for the saints and people of God to agree together; for the same word which is used here for *pleasant*, is used also in the Hebrew for a harmony of music, such as when they rise to the highest strains of the viol, when the strings are all put in order to make up a harmony,

so pleasant is it, such pleasantness is there in the saints' agreement.

The same word is used also in the Hebrew for the pleasantness of a corn field. When a field is clothed with corn, though it be cut down, yet it is very pleasant, oh, how pleasant is it; and such is the saints' agreement.

The same word in the Psalmist is used also for the sweetness of honey, and of sweet things in opposition to bitter things. And thus you see the pleasantness of it, by its being compared to the harmony of music, to the corn field, to the sweetness of honey, to the precious ointment that ran down Aaron's beard, and to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: and all this is to discover the pleasantness, profitableness and sweetness of the saints' agreement: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is," &c. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, but it is much more pleasant to behold the saints' agreement and unity among themselves.

There are many times breakings and losings in the love of the saints, and therefore when they come to an agreement and union among themselves again, it must needs be very pleasant and profitable and sweet, for things once lost and found again are very sweet. And upon this account it is, that the commandment of love is called "a new commandment," because it is broken so often, and so often renewed again. And the Psalmist speaks here of the sweetness and pleasantness of unity, because there is no sweetness in division; but unity is a good way and means to keep out trouble and evil division from among the people. And,

Further, the more difficulty any mercy is obtained with, the sweeter it is when obtained. There are many things which are hard to come by, but when they are obtained they are sweet; and so there are many difficulties in the way of love and sweet agreement, and the people of God are encumbered with many difficulties, they have many things to put them out of the way of love and of sweet agreement among themselves, and therefore saith the apostle, Phil. i. 27, "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Again. The more suitable any thing is to our condition,

the more pleasant and sweet it is. Now this brotherly love and union is a conjunction of suitable things, and is suitable to our condition, and suitable things are delightful unto men, and the more suitable any thing is, the more we delight in it. And this agreement, this union, is every way suitable to our own condition as we are *men*; and is also suitable to all the creatures, for they run together and agree together. And it is suitable to us also as we are *christians*, it is suitable to Christ's command: "A new command (saith he) I give unto you, that you love one another." It is suitable to Christ's own example, who hath loved us; and suitable also to the gospel, which is a gospel of peace: "Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel, that you be of one spirit and of one mind." So, I say, this holy agreement is every way suitable, and therefore the more pleasant and delightful, and so it ought to be unto us.

As it is pleasant and delightful, so it is a profitable good: "Behold how good a thing it is," it is very profitable. For is it not profitable for the "dew to fall upon Hermon, and upon the hills of Zion, to make them fruitful?" Why such is the dew of holy agreement, when it falls upon the hearts of men: and this doth make men increase and multiply in the church, and to be fruitful in good works; the Psalmist saith, "God commandeth his blessing;" and when God blesseth, we shall certainly increase and multiply; and this I say doth increase the church, and hereby are the saints both increased and delighted by the blessing of God on them, they do increase in things that are good and profitable; and this was the thing which Christ prayed for, yea prayed for again and again; yea as I said it is the great thing which Christ hath commanded: a new command &c. Is it not therefore good and profitable to love one another?

Again, This is the mercy and the grace that is promised, specially in the latter times glorious things are spoken of, and and promised to the last days; and this is one of those things which are promised, and if so, it is then certainly good and profitable.

Again, This is the legacy which Christ left with his disciples and people; saith he, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you,"

John xiv. 27, and therefore surely this agreement among brethren is very good and profitable.

Again, Certainly it is good and profitable to walk worthy of the high calling to which Christ hath called us, as the apostle speaks, Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3, "I beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," &c.

Again, Is it not good and profitable that our prayers should be heard, that God should hear and grant our requests and prayers? Why, look into the Scriptures, and you will find that our love is a help to our prayers; it is a help unto us, whereby to have our prayers heard and answered.

Again, Is it not good and profitable for a man to know that he is a child of God, and that he hath an interest in Christ? Why, look into 1 John iii. 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:" there is a day of death, of natural death, whereby man shall pass from life to death; and there is likewise a time of spiritual life; when a man passeth from death to life. Now how shall I know whether I am "passed from death to life?" Why, if I love the brethren. Yea, saith Christ, "Hereby shall all know that you are my disciples, if you love one another:" not only yourselves shall know it, but others shall know it also; and is it not then very good and profitable? For hereby you shall know that your prayers are heard; and by this also you shall know that you are passed from death to life; and hereby you shall not only know yourselves to be Christ's disciples, but others shall know it also; and if it be so, then certainly it must be good and profitable.

Again, This will give a relish and a savour to all your enjoyments; it is the salt of all your comforts: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

Although our condition be never so prosperous, yet if we cannot agree among ourselves, if love and peace be wanting, that sours all the rest; and though the ordinances be never so sweet, and our privileges never so many, yet if we be not united together in love, all is made sour; this is that which sours all our enjoyments, the want of love and agreement, for that gives a relish to all our enjoyments when we have it.

Again, This is that which will make all things easy unto you, though they be never so hard in themselves; whereas the contrary will make all things hard though never so easy: if I am to do a work or service for one: why, though the work be never so hard of itself, yet love will make it easy; many complain and say they cannot profit by the ordinances: why, what is the reason? It is for want of love to them; there are jars and contentions between friend and friend, between this man and the other man; why, it is for want of love: love would make all things easy for you, though never so hard. Now put all these things together, and then you may see, what a pleasant and profitable thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, to love, to unite, to live in unity one with another.

Well then if this be so, why should we not all abound in it? Why do not we love and agree one with another, if it be so good and profitable as we have heard, then let us all agree together.

But it may be some will say, we do live together in love and unity, and we are united one to another, but

Yet give me leave to mind you of what the apostle saith, 1 Thess. iv. 9, "But as touching brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you; for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another, and indeed ye do it towards all the brethren which are in all Macedonia; but we beseech you brethren that you increase more and more." Though you do it, yet we beseech you to increase it more and more, and so I say to you: yea and Christ hath commanded it also, and you must do it in obedience to his command.

If our love be right as it should be, then we shall love others also, even our neighbours and friends and brethren; we shall love them as ourselves. "The second commandment (saith our Saviour) is like unto it, that you love your neighbour as yourself." Pray for yourselves, do all the good you can for yourselves, avoid all iniquity that may come upon yourselves, and to prove your love to be right do all this for your neighbours also, and love them as yourselves.

If our love be as it should be, we shall then love others, because they are godly, let them be of this opinion, or of the other opinion, yet that matters not; though they be not of my opinion, yet if my love be right, I love them because they

are godly, and I love him most that is most godly ; and as he increaseth in godliness, so must my love increase toward him.

If your love be true, and such as it ought to be, then you will love one another, and love your brother ; as Christ loved you, even so ought you to love one another ; how was that ? Why, Christ loved you freely, in opposition to all the injuries you had done unto him : it is said, 1 John i. 6, 7, “ If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth ; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another :” and in John iii. 16, “ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” Yea Christ hath so loved us, that he hath laid down his life for us ; and we are to love as Christ loved, even to the laying down of our lives for our brethren.

If your love be true, it ought to be without restriction, yea and without all dissimulation : I say you are to love without any restriction, the only measure of love is to know no measure ; and you are to love without any dissimulation, yea, and your love ought to be also, without degeneration ; many do begin to love spiritually, but end carnally ; but true love is without restriction, dissimulation, or degeneration.

If your love be true and such as it ought to be, then it will never be bought, neither can it be sold ; love cannot be bought, and if it be true love, it will never be sold, neither directly nor indirectly.

If your love be as it ought to be it will be singular, it will make you singular in your love. “ Love your enemies, saith Christ ; It hath been said you shall hate your enemies, and love your neighbours,” but I say unto you, love them both, “ love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and despitefully use you ; for if you love them that love you what reward have you, do not even the publicans so,” Matt. v. 43, 44, 45. Love them that hate you, this is singular love ; and love where it is true will make a man thus singular in his ways and carriage.

True love is a praying love. Says one, “ I never loved any man, till I had prayed for him in particular.” True love, I say, is a praying love.

And true love is a love at all times, at one time as well as another.

And a man that loves truly declares that he is loosened

from the world, and that he is one that is wrought upon by the Holy Ghost. In the primitive times, it was said that they were all of one heart, and all things were common among them; and when we are thus of one heart and of one mind it doth declare that we have been wrought upon by the Holy Ghost; and therefore certainly there is a great mistake in men's love; all men say they love the saints; they love them in words, though I am afraid many love them but little in their hearts.

But you will say, How far is our love to be exercised, upon whom and how far? I say no more but this, so far as the word brethren doth extend, so far this union and love ought to go, "Behold how pleasant and how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." So far, I say, as this word brethren extends; and that is so far as God is their Father, it matters not for opinion or what judgment they are of; if God be their Father they are your brethren, and are to be beloved by you, and so far is your love to reach and extend.

But you will say, Wherein doth this love consist?

Why, in these three things:

In the matter of our judgments.

In the matter of our affections. And

In the matter of our practice.

1. In the matter of our judgments. "Be of the same mind one towards another, mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate; be not wise in your own conceit, recompence no man evil for evil; if it be possible as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." Rom. xii. 16.

2. In the matter of our affections, in the 10th verse of this chapter: "Be kindly affectioned one towards another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."

3. In the matter of our practice, read the 3rd verse of this chapter: "For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Thus you see how we should act as to our judgments, affections, and practices one toward another.

But you will say, If this be so, then how much is our

love wanting one toward another, but what shall we do that our love to one another may be more knit together; what shall we do that we may advance and rise to this holy agreement, both in our own hearts and others?

For answer hereunto take these directions.

Be serious in this work and lay aside the former hinderances of your love, and your former divisions; and let not any of you say this is the fault, and that is the fault, and such a one is the cause of it, and such a one is the occasion of it. No, but lay the fault on yourselves, lay it upon yourselves and not upon others, and say, "It is I, the Lord knows it is I; it is I that have raised this storm;" and say as David, "I have sinned, I have sinned." Let not your former divisions be forgotten, but take warning by them; lay not the fault, I say, upon others, but upon yourselves, and acknowledge it and say, It is I, I Lord that have sinned. And,

If you do desire to be serious in this work, then do you desire peace; and if it be possible live at peace with all men. The same word that is used in the original for persecutors, is also used for peace, to shew that we should follow after it with might and main, as persecutors follow those they persecute, and that if possible we should live at peace with all.

Be sure you strengthen your love; love must be strengthened else this union cannot continue; it is the property of love to interpret things in the best sense, to interpret things well.

It is the property of love to speak highly of the person or thing beloved; where there is a uniting and a sweet agreement, there love will speak high things of each other.

The property of love is to cover the infirmities of those they love; and indeed how can there be any agreement if infirmities be not covered. It is the property of love to give no offence, nor to take any; and it is a great sign that there is no agreement, nor no love, when people are so apt to give offence and to take offence; for true love is apt to do neither, but to take all in good part.

True love knows how to give and how to take admonitions. And thus you have heard what love will do; therefore I beseech you to strengthen your love to one another; yea, I



beseech you in the Lord to increase it more and more one toward another.

But you may say further, Suppose there be a difference in the matter of our judgments or opinions; what shall we do to remove it? Why,

Be sure of this, that you do not mistake the meaning of that scripture which your judgment is founded upon. It is said "There was a division among the people because of Christ;" why for what was it, what was the reason of it? It was because of misunderstanding, and for want of a right understanding of Christ. So I say, this division may come for want of a right understanding of the Scriptures, upon which our judgment is grounded and founded. But

Consider, O man, whether you do not settle your judgment upon the judgment or opinion of any, or upon the knowledge of another. "Hast thou faith," saith the apostle, "have it to thyself before God;" Rom. xiv. 22. But is not a man then to confess his faith before others when he is called to it? Yes, but the apostle speaks here of lesser things; if thou hast faith have it to thyself in little disputable things; and do not rely upon others, but look to thyself and give things a time; "in due time God will reveal," saith the apostle.

If you desire this holy agreement, then do what you can to keep union in the ministry and between the ministry. It was not for nothing that our Saviour prayed, John xvii. 11, 21, "Holy Father keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are, that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." It is not good for people to cry, "I am for Paul, and I am for Apollos, and I am for Cephas," and the like, this is the way to make division; therefore do all you can to live in love and unity; for love is of God and the contrary is of the devil.

Take heed of disputation, what have we got this many years by disputation? Those that are weak are sooner brought in by humiliation than by disputation.

If after all this there do remain division among you, by reason of your judgments or opinions; then remember the apostle's rule and be sure to walk by it; for, saith he(as we instanced before) "Let no man think more highly of himself

than he ought to think, but to think soberly; as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The apostle directs us to live humbly and to walk meekly one toward another; and not to be rash or to think highly of ourselves. But further:

If you would live in love and unity, then let us look upon other men's infirmities in conjunction with their excellencies, and their excellencies in conjunction with their infirmities; and thereby the one will take away or hide the other. Let us not pore only upon a man's infirmities, upon his *buts* as I may say; he is a godly man but———: therefore if you would agree, join his infirmities and his excellencies together, and then look upon him.

If you should meet with any provocation that may weaken your love one toward another, then be sure to take that as an opportunity to exercise your patience and your love; when you meet a beggar in the streets full of sores, then you think you have an opportunity to exercise your charity, to give something. And so you should say when you are provoked by another to debilitate your love and affection, you may say, Why now have I an opportunity to exercise my patience. Again,

If you will live in love and unity, then you must resolve with the grace of God, to love where you are not beloved; let love arise above all difficulties; labour for a gospel spirit, to love though you are not loved. A legal spirit is a fretful spirit, saith Christ, "You know not of what spirit you are of;" labour, I say, after a gospel spirit, yea the spirit of Christ "who was as a lamb, he opened not his mouth." If you would live in love and unity, then take heed of a legal spirit, and labour after this gospel spirit. Again,

If you would agree together and live in love and unity, then be humbled for the want of love to one another, and take heed for the future of those things that hinder your love one toward another. There are four or five of them, observe them and take heed of them.

1. Pride. A proud man is much given to contention.

2. Passion. For though a man dislikes and is sorry for what he hath done in his passion when it is over; and though what he doth in his passion be one thing, and what he doth

in his serious consideration is another thing; yet we are to take great heed of passion.

3. Another enemy to love is strangeness; strangeness ends in enmity. When brethren and friends grow strangers one to another, then they surmise things one of another, and that destroys love and unity.

4. Another is designing one against another. True love knows no designs upon others. No man can endure to have designs laid against him. Designing causeth anger, enmity and hatred, and hinders true love one toward another.

5. Another is whispering: "A whisperer separateth true friends," Prov. xvi. 28. But now if any one should come to me and tell me any thing against a brother, I would not believe the whisperer till I had spoken with the other; for a cause can never be truly known nor judged of, till both parties have been heard speak. Thus you may see the five things that hinder love, that is, pride, passion, strangeness, designing one upon another, and hearkening unto whisperers. Now as you desire to live in love and unity, observe these things, and take heed of them.

Let me say to you, holy and beloved brethren, if you would love one another, then forgive one another, and live more unto God who loveth you; live more to God, lest he should turn his love to hatred and wrath against you.

Strengthen your love to God himself; the more love you have to God, the more will you love others.

If you would live in love and unity, then you must willingly take wrong, and give up your right for peace sake and for agreement. Saith Abraham to Lot, "Let there be no difference between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we are brethren." Now Abraham was the elder, and therefore it was his right to have the choice; but yet for peace sake he gives up his right, and says to Lot, "Take what you will, the right-hand or the left." There was a division between them, and the Canaanites were in the land, and therefore it was no good time for them to be at difference one with another. When the Canaanites were in the land, it was no good time then for good men to strive, and therefore Abraham for peace sake gives up his right. So I say for peace sake and for a holy agreement, you should willingly give up your right, and render up your own right to preserve peace

and unity one with another. O friends, love one another, that you may declare yourselves to be heavenly children, to be children of your heavenly Father. Consider Phil. i. 27 : " Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ ; that whether I come or be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

O friends, let me beseech you to love one another, and to take all advantages that may increase your love. How can you shew your face before the free love and grace of God, if you do not love one another ? With what face can you go to God for free grace and love, when you yourselves have no love for your brethren.

If a poor man should do a rich man a great deal of prejudice, and if this rich man should nevertheless invite this poor man to a feast, and welcome him, and do him abundance of good ; would you not say that this is wonderful love and kindness, because the poor man is no way able to gratify him, or to make any requital for what he receives, but only by thankfulness : it may be he may be thankful to him. Why thus it is with us now, this is our own case ; for we have done great injury to God, and yet God hath loved us, and hath given us blessings and riches. And what doth he expect for it all ? Surely no reward from us, for he knows we are poor and not able to gratify him ; no, he expects nothing, but only that we should love one another. Says God, You can do nothing for me, all that I desire is, that you would love one another in truth. How then, I say, will you be able to shew your faces before the God of heaven, if you love not one another.

Oh look after this love, which is so much commended in this little Psalm. Oh how sweet and perfuming it is, it is as sweet as honey, " it is like unto the oil that ran down Aaron's beard, like the dew upon Hermon, and as the dew that fell down upon the mountains of Zion." Yea this it that which is sweet and profitable, that which will perfume you. Now if you do desire that God's perfume may come upon you, and that the dew of God's blessings may fall upon you, labour more and more to love one another, and let not love be wanting. I cannot tell how it may be with you, yet let me desire you, as you would honour yourselves now, and as

you desire happiness in this life, and also to be blessed hereafter to all eternity, observe this new commandment to love one another. And as you do desire to declare that you have received free grace, and that you have that seal with which God seals the soul for his own, to live with him for ever, be exhorted to be of one mind, and love one another. "Rejoice in the Lord, and be of one mind;" be united one to another, and let your hearts abound in love more and more one toward another.

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### SERMON VI.

*"The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."*—  
MICAH VI. 9.

METHINKS I see a great rod ready to be laid upon the back of this nation, and I would therefore at this time endeavour to inform you what the voice of this rod is; and have to that end chosen this scripture to speak unto.

In this chapter then you have God's controversy with his own people, set down at the end of verse 2: "For the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." And then he chargeth them with

1. Unthankfulness for many years, in verses 3, 4, 5: "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherewith have I wearied thee? Testify against me, for I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," &c.

2. He chargeth them with formality, and shews them the evil of it, in verses 6, 7: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams," &c. And then,

3. He pleads against them, in verse 8: "He hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." And then,

4. He seals up the sentence in this verse of my text: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."