

"ONE ANOTHER"

SERMON PREACHED BY

A. E. Emmons Jr.

at

THE FOOTE STREET CHURCH OF CHRIST

CORINTH, MISS.

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF:

Elders, Foote Street Church

Lindsay A. Allen,

I do not know of a place in the world that I could be tonight where I would like to just forego the pleasure of preaching the gospel and just talk to you about a lot of things. As I stand here tonight there are many memories in my mind, one of which some of you know about, maybe some of the rest of you don't. But a number of years ago when the brethren first of all agreed for me to come here to work with them, one of the elders at that time, many of you remember, was brother Tom McCullough. At that time Aunt Fannie was bedridden, or practically so. And brother Tom went home and said "Fannie, we hired us a preacher today." And she said, "Who?" And he told her, and she said, "Tom, you made a bad mistake, that boy doesn't have but a half dozen sermons." Aunt Fannie didn't know how right she was! That goes back, however, so long that I don't want to begin to talk about times and places.

There are so many here that we have known in the past and had the privilege of working with in various capacities that it would be futile to try to mention all of it. And there are some of you here in the audience whom I lived and labored with before and still sitting the the same pew, practically so, at least--looks like it. And there are others that are here from various places where we have had a part in the Lord's work and some whom we have worked with in other states and are now worshipping with you. But it is always a pleasure wherever we are to have a part in the work of the Lord. It is indeed a pleasure to be associated with brother Allen and brother Thornton here tonight. We have labored with both of these men in the gospel in times past and consider them to be faithful preachers of the gospel. It is always a privilege and a pleasure to be associated with our preaching brethren. I wonder, sometimes if members of the church get just a little bit weary of hearing that--I hope you don't. Because preachers have some peculiar problems that they understand one with another--you understand that here tonight, I'm sure.

I could just go on and on talking, but I am not going to do that. We are here for more serious purposes tonight. We are here to study the Word of the Lord. And I hope, in the next few minutes, that we may be able to call to your attention some matters that will help you in being a better Christian, make of you a better servant of God.

Brother Allen wrote me to speak upon this series of sermons. He gave me the privilege of selecting a subject. I submitted two to him and told him to take one of them. He took this one because some of the content of the other one that was suggested might overlap with some of the things that other men had suggested that they might speak upon. I'm glad he selected this one, because I like to preach it. I strongly suspect that I've preached it more in the last five years than any other one sermon that I preach. And even if I had not known some of the circumstances that exist in Corinth tonight, I am not so sure that I might not have chosen this same sermon. For the simple fact that we're living in troubled times. The world is troubled in general. This is a period of war and strife and turmoil--men are troubled with the problems ~~infixed~~ with the affairs of the world, as well as affairs and problems amongst themselves. We're living in a period now that is undergoing, perhaps, the greatest sociological change of any period known to any of us. Because of that, I fear that some of us maybe do not recognize that all of that gets into the church. It is next to impossible for us to live in this age of great sociological change and not see the influence of those social changes in the lives and actions and conduct of individual members of the Lord's church. Seeing that come to pass in the last few years, I have been talking along the lines and teaching along the lines of this particular sermon more than ever before in all my work as a preacher of the gospel.

When I first began preaching the gospel, the beginning of the restoration movement was in progress. I'm not saying that there is not a spark of it left, but I remember that when I first began preaching the gospel there was a great deal of talk about what was accomplished in the restoration movement. You don't hear much about it nowadays. I'm afraid in restoring Christianity, we have forgotten somewhat to restore ourselves. We have been exceedingly scrupulous and careful to restore the doctrines of first principles, and I wouldn't be surprized if we don't need another restoration movement in the church. And that would have to do with the individual lives of you and of me as members of the church. I am not unaware, of course, of conditions that have prevailed in your congregation, and I confess to you frankly tonight that I have selected the subject for at least one reason because of the knowledge of that situation. But be that as it may locally tonight, the thing could be preached in any community, in any congregation of the church tonight with just as much force.

I was talking recently to a very good preacher friend of mine. He had moved to a place where I had formerly lived where there had been disturbances in the local church. And he said some had said to him, "Why did you come here to preach?" He said, "Brother Emmons, my answer was that I looked at six different places. Every one of them had trouble." That man's observation is the general condition in the church today. I dare say that there are fewer preachers who are preaching for regular congregations where there isn't trouble than there are those who preach where there is trouble. That is part of the sociological change of the day. It gets into the church. We observe that there are troubled times upon every situation, almost in every community. These are indeed perilous times in the Lord's church. I believe what we need above everything else is to reassess the aims of Christianity and what we need to do is get back to the old original plan of Christian living and Christian relationship. And we need to learn what it means to live together as the people of God and to worship and work in such a way as to bring glory and honor unto the Lord rather than shame and disgrace. Because of the feeling of the need of just such situations, I was reading in a gospel paper a few years ago an article by a brother, and as one of the points of that rather lengthy article, in a very brief fashion he mentioned that the New Testament teaches that we owe several things to one another. He called attention to five or six of the things that we owe to each other as Christians. And I thought as I read it, why that's not complete. I reached in the book shelf above the desk and pulled down my worn copy of Cruden's Concordance, and I got me a pencil and a piece of paper and I decided to make a list of all the things the New Testament says we owe one another as Christians. I confess to you tonight that before I had anywhere near completed that study, I became amazed. I had read all of those passages before, yes, many times just as you have. But I had never taken the trouble to get me a piece of paper and a pencil and set them down to see how many there were. Out of all those things that was suggested, this passage seems to serve better to introduce the study.

"If there is, therefore, any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation or love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind doing nothing through faction or through vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, each counting another more than himself. Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others, Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who existing in the form of God counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking

the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also highly exalted Him and gave unto Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." No man has ever read that passage and understood its meaning, without turning away from it with a fuller understanding of what it means to be a Christian and have your relationships with fellow Christians. If one thing is taught in the Bible, and the church of Christ has always contended for that, it is that there must be unity among the people of God. We have preached unity to our neighbors and friends as long as I can remember. One of the first sermons that I remember was a sermon that was on the subject of unity. We have urged that religious denominationalism and division is sinful, and it is---just as sinful tonight as it is ever been! We have taught the world that God's people, people who claim to be Christians must dwell together in unity, or else they profane the name of Jesus Christ. And yet I wonder sometimes if we ourselves have learned the first part of that lesson.

In praying His memorable prayer in the 17th chapter of John, Jesus prayed, "Not for these only do I pray, but for all of them who believe on me through their word that they may be one, even as thou Father art in me and I in them that they also may be in us that the world may know that thou didst send me." Brethren, did you know that the only way the world has of knowing that Jesus has come into the world and the only way that it has of seeing His influence is through your life and my life? The careless world does not read the Bible, it must depend upon us. I believe, therefore, that one of the ways that God has used, perhaps one of the most outstanding of the ways to try to impress upon us this relationship, is in the use of the expression "one another." The rest of the sermon tonight, or lesson, whatever you want to call it, call it what you will, is going to consist merely and simply of a study of God's use of that expression. I'm not going to make any effort to connect them together in any logical sequence, nor am I going to make any effort to use all of the verses or passages, but simply to garner and gather from the Word of the Lord, as long as time shall allow tonight, some of the greatest truths that God has expressed in this relationship, with the idea of what we owe to one another. The first one to which I call your attention is I Peter the fourth chapter and the ninth verse. In that the apostle says, "Using hospitality one to another without murmuring!" Now it's quite one thing for me to extend Christian hospitality to somebody and then murmur and complain as soon as they're out the door, and it's still another thing for me to extend that same hospitality in all good feeling and understanding. It isn't difficult for me to extend hospitality to another Christian and then fuss and murmur and complain, glad he's gone and hope he never comes back, and all of that sort of thing. But it is rather difficult maybe for me to extend what we mean by Christian hospitality one to another without murmuring. The Lord intends that the relationship between His people be such that any of God's people may extend hospitality to any of the rest of the people of God without murmuring and complaining. Too many times today there are only a few of our own brethren to whom we can do that, because of our personal attitudes and dispositions. But the record says "extending hospitality one to another, using hospitality one to another without murmuring." If I were to ask you tonight, or if you want to make a guess about it, what one duty or responsibility do we find more times in the New Testament connected with this expression "one another" than any other, I wonder what you would say.--wonder how many would know the one that is mentioned

most frequently. Some would, maybe others would miss it. But to set that one forth, I have selected the 17th verse of John the 15th chapter. Jesus says, "These things I command you, that ye may love one another." The Bible teaches us that Christians have to love one another. I know that as far as I'm personally concerned, there are some brethren in the church that are pretty hard to love. And I strongly suspect that some of them find me that way, too. If you could talk to the right brethren it might be that you'd find out that I'm a pretty hard fellow to love. That is because of the clash of individual personality. But it makes no difference to me how hard I am to love, or how hard you are to love, Jesus said, "this I command you, that ye love one another." Brethren, we'll either learn to love one another, or we're going to hell. That's straight talk, isn't it? But that's the way it is.

After preaching on loving one another at one place, a sister came up and she was visibly disturbed and she said, "There is one member of the church that I just can not love." The answer to that is you just can not go to heaven. No need in mincing words about it, no need in making excuses--we'll either learn to love one another or we'll go to hell. You can loose all of the sympathy you want to on the infidel and the atheist and the agnostic and the critic, and you can lose all the sympathy you want to on the immoral reprobate and the fellow that's a low-down good-for-nothing nobody, and you can lose all the sympathy you want to for that old hypocrite who doesn't obey the gospel, Hell's going to be just as hot for those of us who don't love one another as it is for them. Over in the epistle of John, in writing to Christians, he said, "If you have not learned to love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen? He that loveth not his brother, the love of God is not in him." Now John didn't try to clothe that in beautiful language. He 's just telling it like it was. If love does not exist, if there is no love in our hearts for one another, it just isn't any love for God there either. Sometimes we hear brethren say, "We just can't love 'So and So.'" Then you can't love God. You don't have to like what he did, you don't have to agree with every position he's taken, and you may not even agree with the way he's living--you may think he's living wrong--but you still got to love him! And if we haven't learned to do that, we wouldn't be happy if we got to heaven. In the first place we're not going to get there if we don't learn that lesson. In the second place if we did get there, we'd be the most miserable creatures that ever entered the pearly gates, because in heaven it's going to be different.

Then, here's another, passing on from many passages that might be cited along that line. In Hebrews 10:24, and I suspect that some of us could quote verse 25, the next one after it, but in this one the writer says, "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works." Let us consider one another! Let me ask you a question--how many things have you been guilty of doing in the last year that you did without any consideration whatsoever as to how it would effect the brethren--your brothers and sisters in Christ. How many of us are guilty of just going about doing just about as we please and we don't stop to ask ourselves, how is this going to effect the brethren. The writer here says "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works." I suggest to you humbly tonight that a Christian has absolutely no right to do anything until he stops and considers how is this going to effect one another. Now this also is a qualified statement. The writer not only says we must consider one another, but we must consider one another to a particular purpose--what is it? Let us therefore consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works. I must consider the brethren to see whether or not what I'm going to do is going to provoke them unto love and good works. I have absolutely no right, as a Christian, to take a course

of action that will provoke in the other direction. As a Christian, it's my God-given and divinely-appointed duty to so conduct myself that what I do will provoke someone else, my brother or sister in Christ unto love, not unto hate; unto good works, not unto evil works. Too many times what we do, even after we consider the thing is designed to promote hate and evil works and that which isn't good and we go ahead and do it. That isn't the teaching of that passage.

But here's another. In I. Thess. 4:18, Paul said, after discussing the coming of Jesus and the beautiful scenes of the resurrection, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Stop a moment and think what it would mean to comfort one another--Christians to comfort each other. Too many times, when hours come in our lives that we need to be comforted, we are so estranged with one another, that comfort is impossible. In the last two years I have lived amongst people in the same congregation of God's people, that if the hour had come in the lives of some of them where they needed to be comforted by their brethren, if certain brethren had even attempted such a comfort it would have been a slap in the back. Think about it. Brethren living together in the kingdom of God in such a way and in such a fashion and with such attitudes and ideas that they can't even comfort one another. I'll tell you, brethren, there comes times in the lives of us all when we need more than anything else the comfort that we can give to one another. There are times in our lives when the brethren, our brothers and sisters in Christ, can comfort us more than our kinpeople can. A lot of people don't believe that, but it's true. There are times when that comfort is more reassuring and does more for us to keep us in the faith than if those extending the comfort were our own flesh and blood. So wherefore comfort one another with these words--the words God has given us for that purpose.

Then here's another. In Galatians the fifth chapter and the 13th verse, Paul said, "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom, only use not your freedom as a occasion of the flesh, but through love, be ye servants one of another." I strongly suspect that right there the apostle Paul has laid upon the heart of every Christian one of his most difficult tasks. One of the hardest things for a human being to do is to bring himself to the position of a servant. Paul says "Brethren, be ye servants one of another." You know, the trouble with most of us--all of us--is simply this. We want to be served, but we don't want to serve. We want somebody to be our servant, we're not interested in being theirs. Along the lines brother Cox was talking about the other night, and I sat over here and enjoyed some of the things he said Tuesday night because I'd been in the same hole he'd been describing and I knew what he meant. When we lived in Birmingham there was a good woman, I say she's a good woman--I really believe that, loved the church--but she became sick and was in the hospital and the wife and I went and visited her. Then after she got out a while we noticed that she wasn't coming to church as regularly as usual and we went over to see her and we asked her why. Well, like a lot of other members, she sorta hedged and hemmed, and hawed, as we say. Then finally she said, "Well I'm just gonna tell you what's wrong." Well that's what I was fishing for. So she said, "Brother Emmons, here's what's wrong, I stayed in that hospital two weeks and do you know what. You and your wife were the only two members of the church that came to see me. Now stop and think, what was she doing? She'd become angry with the members of the church because we hadn't rendered service unto her when she thought she needed it, and so therefore she takes her spite out on the Lord. It's equivalent to her saying, "Lord, your people didn't come to see me while I was sick and your work can just go--I'm gonna quit." Imagine that, if you can. Well that was her attitude. Now what was her trouble? Now first of all, let me say I believe the members of the church

ought to have been over there to see her--I believe a lot of them should have gone to see her. In every community that ought to be the rule and the order, but on the other hand her troubledown deep inside was this, she wanted to be served. She felt like the church owed her something, and if she didn't collect what she thought the church owed her, she's going to get mad about it and quit the Lord. Now just stop and think about that. Be ye servants one of another. I've had members of the church to come to me and say "Oh, the church is just going to the bow-wows and so on and so on and so on, and I'm not happy in the church"--I've got the perfect solution to that. I've got a prescription that will work every time. You get busy doing something for the Lord and for other people and you won't have to worry about the rest of the people in the church. Be ye servants one to another; the reason we're not happy in the Lord's work is we're not doing for anybody else. That's exactly the solution. Be ye servants, then, one of another.

Here's another thing. In Romans 15 and 17 Paul said "Wherefore receive ye one another even as Christ also received you to the glory of God." I wonder sometimes if we have even gathered a tenth part of the meaning of that passage. "Wherefore receive ye one another--how--even as Christ also received you to the glory of God." I decided this a number of years ago on this business of fellowship and matters of that sort and that's this. I don't intend to disfellowship anybody if I can help it who is in fellowship with the Lord. If the Lord will receive him, then I'm afraid not to. If the Lord doesn't receive him, then I'd be afraid to receive him. "Receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you to the glory of God." Soon after I moved to Union City, Tennessee, a couple of years ago, I asked some of the brethren there, "Doesn't brother so and so load prayer--brother so and so, why don't you ever call on them?" Well, they sorta looked at one another with a sheepish look on their faces and one of the men stepped up and said, "Well I'll just tell you preacher, why we don't call on them." So he told me a little story and said since that happened we just don't call on them. I said, "Well, one of two questions are in order, number one is are they still in the fellowship of this congregation?" He thought a minute and he said "Yes, I guess they are." I said "Are they still in fellowship with the Lord?" He hung his head and said, "Well I guess they are." I said "Well what are you doing drawing a line offellowship against them for?" The Bible says "Wherefore receive you one another even as Christ also received you to the glory of God." Now if I've acted in such a way that Jesus Christ can't take me any more, then of course my brethren ought not to recognize me and fellowship me. But if the Lord is still fellowshipping me, then my brethren better do it if they don't want to go to the wrong place. The same thing is true with everyone else. "Wherefore receive ye one another." I don't mind telling you that I am of the opinion today that in the Lord's church there are being some lines of fellowship drawn that Jesus and the apostles never did draw. I believe that's true as I stand before you tonight. So receive you one another even as Christ also received you unto the glory of God.

But here's another. In Hebrews 3:13 the writer said "But exhort one another day by day so long as it is called Today." In Hebrews 10:25 "exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"--another duty and responsibility that Christians owe to one another is the responsibility, the duty, the obligation of exhorting one another. You know how we act today in the church in many places--preachers act that way, too. Something comes up and instead of going out and exhorting one another, we get on the telephone and across the backyard fence, and around the stove at the store or anywhere else we can talk, and

we talk our infernal tongues out of our heads, if you please, instead of going to that fellow and exhorting him to do better. You know I've analyzed the trouble with us right there. Jesus didn't say now go out and tell everybody in the world the faults of your brethren. He said exhort one another. Let me ask you a serious question. You answer it for yourself. Don't speak out in time of books--I wouldn't want to tell you either. But how long, now, has it been--just stop and think--how long has it been since you, as a member of the Lord's church, went to some brother or some sister whom you thought had done wrong and exhorted him to do better. Now I didn't say how long has it been since you pawled out somebody--probably that hadn't been long. But that's not exhortation. How long has it been since you exhorted--how long has it been since you went to somebody that you thought was wrong and maybe had committed an awful sin, and you sat down in the fear of God lest looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted and talk to him like he was a beloved brother in Christ, and begged and exhorted him to do better--how long has it been? But I think I know how long it's been with some of us. Exhort one another.

Passing on from that to James the fifth chapter and the 16th verse. Here's a verse that contains two things that we owe to one another. "Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray for one another." Now we don't need the rest of that verse "that ye may be healed" it is. But "confess therefore your sins one to another and pray one for another."

You know I've been around quite a bit and I've seen some things that I wish some of you could have seen. But I've found out that this occurs today. Differences between brethren will come up and I see it one way and he sees it another way, and we both think we're right and we think the other fellow is wrong, and I don't intend to confess to him and he doesn't intend to confess to me, and we'll go to the judgment like that and both be lost. "Confess therefore your sins one to another." Don't tell me you don't have any--nobody, we've all got them! In situations of stress, in times of trial among brethren, everybody gets wrong. Whenever anybody tells me I didn't do any wrong, he did it all, I didn't do any--I know that's not go to start with--been around too long. "Therefore confess your sins one to another and then pray one for another" and don't pray for the Lord to strike him dead either--pray for the Lord to heal him, pray for the Lord to forgive him, pray for the Lord to give me the strength and the courage and the faith necessary to get right myself. Pray earnestly and fervently and that'll go a long way towards settling the difficulties between God's people.

But then passing on from that here is another, closely akin to one that we studied a while ago and yet a little different idea. In I Peter 4 and verse 10, he says that every man has received a gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God--minister one to another--a while ago we talked about servants one to another--now, minister one to another, the manifold grace of God. I'm not going to comment much upon that, because there are others that'll take a little more of our time and the field has somewhat been covered.

I'm turning now to Col. 3:13. In that one verse, in two short clauses, there are mentioned two responsibilities that God's people owe to one another, which if I could, the Lord's church in any community to practice, I would settle every difficulty involved. There the apostle says "forbearing one another and forgiving each other." I want to spend a little time right here. What does it mean to forbear? That's a word that I've always had myself a little bit of difficulty with in understanding it. And I think I've been best able to see the picture of forbearance by going back into the Old Testament and watching the forbearance of God Almighty. There through the centuries, as Israel rebelled against Him, as they turned away from Him to serve heathen gods, and as God would give them

over to the enemy to be oppressed; then out of the depths of their oppression, they'd realize their sins they'd call upon God and ask God to help them, and then God would forget about all of the other and go back and forgive them and raise them up and give them a leader and restore them to their former place, it wouldn't be long till Israel would be in the same mess again. Patience, forbearance--too many times today my brother does something against me the first time, he can just put it down, I'll not have any confidence in him again as long as he lives. Brethren, if God treated all of us like that, we'd all go to hell. I would, too. If God didn't have any more patience and forbearance with us than we have with each other, all of us would go to hell--none of us would miss it. But if the forbearance of God that makes it possible for us to sin against God over and over again, then for God to reach down and pick us up out of the mire of sin, restore us to where we were and make of us children of His fit for eternal habitation--God's forbearance, Paul says forbear one another. And then forgiving each other. I preached a sermon on forgiveness in a certain place recently. After the service a good lady came and she was visibly disturbed. Tears were rolling down her cheeks and she said "Brother Emmons, if I could talk to you,--and I could talk to you an hour and a half--I'd like to tell you all about it. There's one person in this world that's hurt me so deeply I don't believe I can ever forgive him." You know the answer to that--then you just never will go to heaven. There isn't any way for us to escape that conclusion. It's either forgive, or be lost--why?--Jesus said "if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will God forgive you. It's either forgive or be lost. Forgiving one another--you know what I think a lot of churches need today, a forgiveness revival, need to do some forgiving. A lot of members of the church--a lot of preachers need to do some forgiving. Preachers are just as guilty as anybody else along this line--sometimes I think we are worse, because we're in a public position, and we get in the press and we gnaw at each other sometimes--we're just as wrong as anybody else. Forbearing one another and forgiving one another--you know this business of forgiveness is a little bit peculiar, we have such varied ideas about it. I heard one fellow out in Texas while I was there talking about a certain woman in the church, who had done a very vile and ugly thing at one time apparently, and she finally made an open confession to the church and just laid the thing bare and confessed it and said that I want to be forgiven--did as much as anybody could do, as far as I know, to straighten it out. And he said "Well I tell you, I'm going to forgive her since she's asked for it, but I never intend to have much else to do with her." Now suppose God treated us that way? Suppose we go to the throne of God and say Lord forgive us of our sins, and God says all right I'll forgive you, but don't you come hanging around me; I don't want to have anything else to do with you.--Forgiveness. Too many of us forgive like Rastus. Rastus got in a razor fight with Sam. Sam got the best of him. Rastus was at the point of death, in the hospital, gasping for the last one. Rastus' preacher came. He said "Rastus, you're gonna die, you'd better forgive him." Rastus gasped "if I lives I forgive him, but if I dies he'd better watch out." That's about the way most of us forgive, I'm afraid. That isn't forgiveness. A lot of people are often heard to say "I aim to forgive him, but I'll never forget it." What he means is he aims to hold it against him as long as he lives. You know, some of the preachers do that. Don't know whether you knew it or not, but they keep a gossip file--I don't have one, I started one and threw it away. Differences in trouble comes up between some of our preachers, you know what they do. They get together and forgive all right, but they stick it back in a filing cabinet on paper with names signed to it, and if the fellow ever makes another crooked step, they've got him! That's been paraded before the church, you know about some of it--that's not forgiveness. The only way to forgive a brother is like Jesus forgives you--that's forgiveness. Our Lord knows how to practice forgiveness. You know there are a number of

* things about it that impress me. One is that when Jesus forgives, he forgives over and over again for the same old sin--ever thought about that? Think how many times the Lord has forgiven me for the same thing, and if I go out tomorrow and do the same ugly thing and repent and ask the Lord to forgive, he'll forgive me again. Not only is that true, but when our Lord forgives he not only forgives over and over again, but he forgives in the knowledge of the fact that I'm apt to do it again, because he knows my weakness. And in the next place, when the Lord forgives me, He forgives me completely--there isn't any half-way measures about the Lord's forgiveness. In the next place when the Lord forgives me, He restores me completely and fully unto Himself without any reservation whatsoever. That is forgiveness, and the apostle here says "forbearing one another and forgiving one another." Brethren, I tell you until we learn to do that, we can talk about our religious enemies as much as we want to and we can talk about the infidel and the atheist going to hell, but until we learn to do that we're going with them just as sure as we're sitting here tonight.

Here's another one. I don't know whether the one I've just got through with talking about is the hardest one or whether this one is, but I strongly suspect the one I'm going to mention now, whether it's the hardest or not, it's the most common of all. In James 4:11, James says "My brethren, speak not one against another." I wonder how much of that's been done? I wonder how much of that's been done among those of us right here in this audience in the last 24 hours. Think about it. You and I trying to get to heaven. We haven't learned some of the most elementary of all Christian principles--my brethren speak not one against another.

Now I call your attention to a difference in contrast here, there is a vast difference, between speaking to one another and speaking against one another. You know that's where we get it all balled up, right there. It's Christian to speak to one another, it's of the devil to speak against one another. Now when a brother is overtaken in a fault the scripture tells me what to do. You go to him and between he and thee alone, restore him. If you do that, you cover a multitude of sins. But most of us when some fault is found, when some mistake is made, instead of going to that brother as God teaches Christians to do it, we go out on the streets and everywhere else in the world that we can find an ear to hear, and as Benny Sunday used to say, we pour slop in the ears of our neighbor. "Brethren, speak not one against another." Somehow it seems that it has never dawned upon some of us that we'll go to hell for that just as we'll go for a lot of other things.--"speak not one against another." Oh, but let me tell you what brother so and so--I still say James said speak not one against another. Oh, but it's such an ugly thing--I don't care how ugly it is,--yes, but he just doesn't show any spirit of forgiveness at all, or repenting--that's all right, "speak not one against another." I was mowing the lawn one day at a place where I lived--I don't do much of that, but this fellow caught me at it. He said preacher, I just heard something. I said what was it. Did you know that one of your members--and he called his name--did so and so? I said no, I haven't heard a word about it, where did you hear it? He said one of your members just told me. Now how many places do you suppose that the members of the Lord's church go around over the community telling outside people all about the scandal and the gossip among the members of the church--speak not one against another, brethren. You know, I like to think of the church sometimes as a family. God is the father, Jesus Christ, the eldest brother, and the Bible teaches that we're all children in God's family. And I like to compare the relationship of my father's family with my heavenly father's family. I suspect my father's family is a little bit like some of your fathers' families, and that is, that you wouldn't have to shake the family tree too far up the line to shake out a rotten apple and uncover some ugly things

that you wouldn't want to tell me about--I know that's the case in mine. But I'll tell you one thing--I am not going to tell you about it. Now you can pry and you can probe and you can beg and you can persuade and you can suggest--you not gonna learn it from me. Why? That's family matters. And I'm suggesting that a lot of these things belong to the family of God. You can't get a lot of people together in such a group as the church, the family of God without having somebody in that isn't what he ought to be. But God never did intend that other members of his family get out in the world and strow the gossip and scandal that exists amongst his people. Keep some things at home.--Brethren, speak not one against another.

But here's another that's rather hard and it contains two in this verse, one of them we've already discussed. Ephesians 4:32 "And be ye kind one to another, forgiving each other, tender hearted, even as God also in Christ forgave you." But let's talk for just a moment about the first one, "Be ye kind one to another." How many of us are guilty of unkindness to other brethren? You know a Christian doesn't have any right to be unkind to another Christian, I don't care what he does? I've had preachers that tried to stab me in the back, and one of the biggest temptations I have as a human being, is not to stab back; I admit that frankly. I'm human, as you are, but that isn't kindness. I haven't practiced kindness when I have done that. I've done wrong--I might as well admit it. "Be ye kind one to another." WE've lived through a generation of the church in my time, in your time when you didn't know who to trust sometimes. I've seen circumstances like this happen. Some preacher would write another preacher a personal letter, and about two or three weeks later He'd pick up a gospel paper and blink his eyes and there was his letter, in print,--didn't intend it way--some of them got on the spot about it, members of the church maybe, in varied circumstances the same thing but "be ye kind one to another, tender hearted. Oh, if we could just practice that!

But here's one in I Cor. 12:25, Paul is talking about the body and its members, comparing the church to that, and he says that there should be no schism in the body but that the members should have the same care one for another. Wonder what that means?--that the members of the body, which is the church, should have the same care one for another. Let's just suppose that next week sometime I go over to the new house they're building for us to live in in Sheffield and I start moving some timber and along after awhile I drop a heavy piece of that timber on my toe and I just almost mash it off. My hands go behind my body and my eyes look down at it and I say to it, well bud you got into this mess, now get out of it the best way you can; I didn't get you in the way of that pole, I didn't have anything to do with it--now you ~~get out of it the best way you can~~ take care of yourself. That's silly, isn't it? Just about as silly as some members of the church. Or suppose that I'm working with some kind of a machine and this hand slips and goes into a bunch of cogwheels and just mashes off two ends of fingers. Terrible thought, isn't it? Hope it never happens to me. But I just say, go on over there, you got yourself into that--I didn't have anything to do with it--isn't that awful? Terrible to concentrate the human body acting toward an injured member in any such fashion. That just doesn't hapen! Well what does happen? Well if I dropped that big stick on my toe, my hands and my eyes and my bloodstream and everything else about me would go right down there and get hold of that toe, and minister to it and do all that it can to ease the pain and to take up the slack and to do the work it ought to do while it's returned. That's what Paul means when he says that the members should have the same care one for another, and brethren, I tell you when we get that same care one for another, it's going to be more difficult than ever before to cause trouble amongst God's people.

But here's another in Romans the fifteenth chapter and the fourteenth verse, and I might suggest that I've got this watch laying here before me--the time's about gone--but I quit letting a watch tell me when to quit, so I'll just go ahead and finish this if you don't mind. In Romans 15:14, Paul says "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." Now a while ago we talked about exhorting one another. Now the word is admonish one another. To me that's a better word--it's better because it's closer. When I exhort a fellow, I go and encourage him, but when I admonish him I beg him, persuade him, urge him, plead with him. And there's the duty, let us admonish one another. I ask you another question, how long has it been since you admonished a brother to do better? And yet I say not how long has it been since we bawled a brother out--that isn't admonition, that isn't exhortation, that isn't even Christianity! But, how long has it been since we really admonished a brother to do better? Now just go down, go over and sit down and say to him "Now we're members of the body of Christ, we love the church and we love the gospel, we're going to see that things are what they ought to be. Now I just believe that we can improve that and I want you to know that I'm your friend and I'm your brother and I want to help, and is there anything I can do to make it easier for you?" That's admonition--how long has it been since we practiced admonition?

While we're thinking along that line we drop down to another. In Romans 14:19, "So then let us follow after things which make for peace and things whereby we may edify one another." The word edify has given me just a little trouble in time, and I've found that it's easier for me to understand what it means by using another word maybe that's akin to it. We pass by a beautiful building like this and we look at it and say "that's a wonderful edifice, isn't it? It's a wonderful structure that somebody's built!" Well, that comes from the same word that the word edify comes from--means the same idea. To edify means to build up, to build up so that people can see that building and appreciate it and love it and understand it. Now Paul says that we should follow after things, first, which make for peace--and no Christian has a right to follow after anything that doesn't make for peace. He that does that will be lost eternally, God says so, so follow after that which makes for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another. I suggest again that no Christian has the scriptural right to follow after anything that isn't designed to build up rather than tear down. Christians do not work on the wrecking crew, Christians do not tear down, they build up--that's their mission, their destiny in the world in which we live. Therefore work after that and follow after that which will edify one another. If I am about to take a course of action, as a Christian, that will be designed to tear down instead of build up, then I have no right as a Christian to take that course of action. If I, as a gospel preacher, am about to do and say things that will tear down the church rather than build it up, then I have no right to do it. But I want to close these meditations with this one, and I guess you'll be glad that we'll come to an end, not that you do not appreciate the truth, but the time has been spent.

The last one, Romans 12:5, speaking of the body and its members again, Paul says "So we who are many are one body in Christ and severally members one of another." That expression that we are severally members one of another is the one that I want to leave with you tonight as we close this discussion in just a moment. God's people are severally members one of another--what does that mean? Well if I've understood what Paul meant by that, it's just this. I'm a member of you and you're a member of me. You might not like that arrangement, but maybe you like it as well as I do--might work both ways, but it's that way anyhow. That's the way God set up the church, that's the way he fitly framed it together, that's the way he put the body of Christ to work--we are severally members one of another.

I'm a member of you, you're a member of me, and even if we don't like it there isn't much we can do about it. What does all that mean? Well it means several things, but here are some conclusions that you can help me draw with that, since we are members severally one of another, I'm a member of you and you're a member of me and we're so intertwined in the body of Christ that it's impossible to separate us except by divine edict. That means, first of all, that I can't do anything to help you without helping me. And it also means that I can't do anything to hurt you without hurting me. You know, a lot of us hadn't thought about that. We seem to have the idea that I can go ahead and crucify my brother and it makes no difference to me--you can't do it in the body of Christ. We are severally members one of another. Whenever I do something to injure and to harm a brother in Christ, I'm biting off my own nose to spite my face.

Thus has God inseparably joined us together in the body of Christ. By the use of the term "One Another", or its equivalent, He seeks to show us our personal duty and responsibility to keep the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". Our entrance into heaven depends upon it. We must stand or fall by God's plan for unity and peace amongst his people.