

Believers are to be affectionately desirous of God and their brethren (Affection Pt 2 - Final)

This is our second & final study on the word *affection* in the Holy Scriptures. In our first study we looked at unnatural and natural *affection* and established a meaning of the word *affection* and provided three points. The meaning from the dictionary, Greek & Hebrew, and from within the Scriptures included; *lust, love, delight, desire & take pleasure*. In our previous study we covered three points:- (1) Man's natural affection is to set his heart on the things of the earth, and (2) believers are encouraged to set their affection on the things above, and (3) in the latter days believers will set their affection on vile things that are against nature. In this study we will consider two points: (1) believers are to be affectionately desirous of God, and (2) believers are to be affectionately desirous of one another.

Let us add a little detail to our points:-

1. Believers are to be affectionately desirous of God.

Ps.84:2 *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

See also Ps.63:1.

Our verse from Psalms does not include the word *affectionately* or *desirous*, and the only time the word *affectionately* is used in Scripture is in 1Thes.2: 8, so how do we get our point from Ps.63:1 that believers are to be *affectionately desirous* of God? The phrase *affectionately desirous* means "a yearning; of uncertain affinity, to long for", which is confirmed in Lk.23: 8. We have established that the word *affection* means; *lust, love, delight, desire & take pleasure*. The word *desirous* is also translated; *covet, greatly desire, be desirous, long and lust after*. Therefore there is a double emphasis of the word *longing, long for or longeth* in our phrase *affectionately desirous*, and I suggest that the words *longeth, fainteth, and crieth out* (used in Ps.84: 2), can be summed up as *affectionately desirous*. Other verses in Scripture say that David longed for the Lord, His salvation (Ps.119: 174), His law (Ps. 84: 2 & 119: 131), and the courts of the Lord (Ps. 63: 1). Therefore we establish according to Ps.84: 2 and 63: 1 that just as David said his soul thirsted and longed for the Lord, his flesh also longed for and cried out for His God, believers today are to be *affectionately desirous* of God.

What does it really *mean* for a believer to be affectionately desirous of their God, to long for the Lord Jesus Christ, to yearn for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

There are two verses in Holy Scripture that help us understand the feeling of yearning for, longing for, or being affectionately desirous of God, and they are Gen.43: 30 and 1Kg.3: 26. In Genesis, Joseph hasn't seen his brothers since they tried to kill him and assumed he was dead. Could you imagine believing that your own family wanted you dead, then believed you were dead, but God had miraculously saved you? Well, the Scriptures record that this happened to Joseph, and when he realised who they were, he "made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber and wept there." Then in the example from 1Kg.3, we find Solomon showing great wisdom of discernment where one mother's baby died in the night, so she took the baby from another mother's bosom and placed her dead baby on her bosom, and the king had to discern who was telling the truth, for both said the dead baby was the others. The king asked for the living child to be divided in two, and give half to each mother. The next verse (26) the woman whose child was alive, spoke "unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." But the other said, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it."

From these two scriptural examples the love of family members is so strong that when facing death of a family member, some experienced their bowels yearning. Are the Scriptures speaking of the physical bowel of the person? Unlikely, given the example of Gen.43 where Joseph's bowel did yearn for his brother with

the result of intense weeping. In addition when we look at the word *bowels* in Greek and Hebrew we find it is also translated, *compassion, tender love, great tender mercy, pity, heart, and inward affection*.

Have you ever wept over the death of a member of your family? If not, have you ever seen a family grieve on TV that has lost their son or daughter in a car accident? Some weep uncontrollably, which would be similar to Joseph whose bowels (his inward affection) did yearn upon his brother. So in this verse from Genesis we have *yearning* and *affection* which cover the meaning of *affectionately desirous*, and therefore show us how we are to respond to our God. It is no surprise therefore that Israel were given the commandment to *love* the Lord with *all* their heart, soul, and might (Deut.6: 5).

When Karen and I went to a Messianic Jewish group the congregation would, at the start of their worship say the words from Deut.6: 4 & 5 (*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God [is] one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*). The Jew and Messianic believer call these two verses the *Shama* (in reference to the “Hear” in verse 4). Hence the reader is to “Hear” that the Lord He is God, and they are to love Him with all their heart, which align with our point that we are to be affectionately desirous of the Lord. So, when we go back to our question, “what does it really mean for a believer to be affectionately desirous of their God, to long for the Lord Jesus Christ, to yearn for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?” we can say that it means we are to feel as if our bowels, our inward affection is weeping uncontrollably, full of tender love.

Is that how you feel toward your God?

How do we show God that our bowels of tenderness love Him, that we are affectionately desirous of Him, that our soul thirsts for Him (as David said in the Psalms)?

We show love to God by obedience (see Deut.30: 20 and Jn.14: 15).

For now let us ask the Lord to give us bowels that yearn for Him, that are daily full of tender love for Him, and may we do so with our tears and our action of obedience to *all* His commandments, because as believers we are encouraged to be *affectionately desirous* toward our God.

2. Believers are to be affectionately desirous of one another.

1Thes.2: 8 *So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only; but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

See also Rom.12: 10 & 2Cor.7: 15.

Now that we know how we are to feel toward our heavenly Father, now that we know how to feel about His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, let us consider how we are to feel about our brethren. We are not going to look at how we are to feel toward our brother, sister, mother, or father, those related by physical birth, but those who are related to us by our spiritual rebirth, our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

In our first point we established that the phrase *affectionately desirous* has a meaning of *yearning* or *longing for*. Hence we searched for verses that included *long for* or *longeth*. Just as there were verses that suggested believers were to *long for* the Lord and His word, we also see that there are verses that encourage us to *long after* our brethren (Phil.2: 26 & 4: 1), and in Rom.1: 11 Paul longed to see his brethren in Rome, and he greatly longed after his brethren in the bowels of Jesus Christ (see Phil.1:8).

Then we have our verse 1Thes.2: 8 where we do not have to work out the meanings of words to make our point, but rather Paul speaks plainly; he encourages the church in Thessalonica to be affectionately desirous of those in the church. And in case the reader did not know the implications of feeling affectionately desirous toward their brethren, Paul explains that he would not only impart the gospel of God, but also his own soul, because the believers were dear unto him.

Is that how you feel about your brethren?

Is that how you see the members of your church congregation feeling toward other believers?

The New Zealand Protestant received an email from a Roman Catholic (RC) church explaining to the editor that the writing of the NZ Protestant was “intolerant of other Christians”. The editor wrote back to the RC church and pointed out that he did not want to stand before his God and be judged for disobeying the commandment to love his brethren, so he asked for evidence of their claims. But our verse in 1Thes.2:

8 goes further than just loving our brethren, we are to be affectionately desirous of them, we are to feel as if our bowels, our inward affection, is weeping uncontrollably, *full* of tender love for them.

How do we show such tender love for our brethren?

Not in the same way we do toward our God, or as a wife shows her husband, i.e. to submit to him (see Col. 3: 18). But here are seven ways a believer can love his brethren:-

- i) we can only love our brethren the way God wants us to if we first know the love of the Lord our God ourselves (see Jn.15: 9), and
- ii) understand what it means to love ourselves, that we may then love our brethren (see Gal.5: 14), and
- iii) desiring to spend time with our brethren rather than with the heathen (see Rom.12: 10), and
- iv) showing charity, longsuffering (Eph.4: 2) and mercy toward them, when they do not deserve to receive such charity, and
- v) in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than themselves (Phil.2: 2, specifically verse 3).

And for those above us in the Lord we are required to esteem them very highly in love (see 1Thes.5: 13), and

- vi) comfort one another in love (see Col.2: 2), and
- vii) by showing pity and not shutting up our bowels of compassion toward our brother when we see a need (see 1Jn.3: 17). This verse in 1John asks the question *how dwelleth the love of God in a believer that shuts up his bowels of compassion when he sees his brother in need?*

The Scriptures go so far as telling believers that when they love *not* their brother, they abideth in death (see 1Jn.3: 14).

How do you show tender love to your brethren?

Do you love your brethren as David loved Saul, even when he was seeking to kill him?

Are you affectionately desirous of your brethren, such that you weep for them, even from your *bowels*?

Let us encourage each other to not only pray for our brethren, but to show them love, weeping when they weep, laughing when they laugh, and comforting them when they are in need, showing charity, and esteeming them above ourselves in love. And we cannot walk in such love if we first do not know of the love of God for ourselves. So let us rejoice in the knowledge that God loves us, and He wants us to love our brethren in a way that we are affectionately desirous of them.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our second and final study on the word *affection* in the Holy Scriptures we have covered two points; (1) believers are to be affectionately desirous of God, and (2) believers are to be affectionately desirous of one another.