

THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

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STRIFE OR PEACE

There is much strife in the world today. There is strife between nations, strife between political parties, strife between co-workers, strife in marriages between husband and wife, strife between parents and children, and even strife in some churches. The works of the flesh are described in Galatians 5:19-21:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunken-

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ness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Looking at the list of the works of the flesh, strife can be caused by hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy and the like. James describes some reasons for strife in James 4:1-3:

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Strife may occur in the church. There can be multiple reasons for such strife. It could be due to one or more individuals exhibiting fleshly attitudes. It could be due to someone holding to a false doctrine.

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (1 Tim. 6:3-5)

If one in the church does not follow the truth of Jesus Christ but instead exhibits a sinful attitude and causes strife, you may need to withdraw from him.

A Christian cannot always avoid strife. Jesus had conflict with the religious leaders when He stood against their hypocrisy and false teachings; this conflict eventually led to His crucifixion. Stephen disputed with the Jews in Acts 6 and 7, which led to his being stoned to death. There was a major conflict within

the early church as recorded in Acts 15:1-2:

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

As a result of the council in Jerusalem, the apostles and elders were able to resolve their conflict and come to a resolution and agreement.

In any conflict that you find yourself engaged in, you should not exhibit the works of the flesh as listed above. Instead, you should exhibit the fruit of the Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-23)

Having love, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control will resolve many conflicts without strife.

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (2 Tim. 2:23-26)

In this passage, the Apostle Paul states that the servant of the Lord must not quarrel. He emphasizes gentleness, teaching, patience and humility. He also teaches to avoid foolish and ignorant disputes. Sometimes conflict can be avoided by simply refusing to get caught up in a dispute in matters that hold no great importance.

As much as it depends upon you, seek peace and avoid strife.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. (Rom. 12:18)

Pursue peace.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. (Rom. 14:19)

Be humble and submit to one another.

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: (1 Pet. 5:5-6)

Consider the other person better than or more important than yourself and look out for their interests.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Php. 2:3-4)

My encouragement to you is to be a person that pursues peace. If possible, avoid or resolve strife by having love, gentleness, patience and humility.

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“HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT”

With unmistakable inspiration and insight, the psalmist wrote “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*” (Psa. 133:1). Such was God’s intent for mankind from creation, but even within the first one hundred and thirty years of man being placed in a beautiful garden of peace and tranquility, the harmony of this first family was shattered when Cain killed his brother Abel.

Even David who penned these words of encouragement and hope was destined to live a life of turmoil and pain from strife within his own family. His father-in-law sought his life. Because of his sin with Bathsheba his son died. Another son had his own brother murdered. His son, Absalom, rebelled in seeking David’s kingship and committed adultery with David’s concubines. This son was killed in fleeing from David, and David mourned at the loss of this rebellious son. As God had said to David through Nathan, the prophet, “*Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house*” (2 Sam. 12:10). What misery David must have suffered.

THIS CONTINUES TO BE A SPOT IN OUR “GARMENTS OF WHITE”

How sad that what could have been a beautiful world in which to live, has through the centuries been marred by strife among its inhabitants. Among the causes of such the Scriptures lists: anger, wrath, envy, jealousy, pride, bitterness, failure to forgive, holding grudges, and such like (e.g., 2 Cor. 12:20, Eph. 4:31). These are the result of the lack of self-control, often prompted by lack of patience and failure to consider the feelings and needs of our fellow-kin in the family of our heavenly Father. It is such a tragedy that we for whom Jesus gave His precious blood are often torn by strife. It should not and does not have to be!

Matters will not always go as we feel they should; and sometimes it is best that they do not – for we are not always correct.

We are advised, “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*” (Php. 2:4). We must learn to not be too critical, but with patience permit another point of view.

If we stand corrected, be grateful that our brother thought enough of us to point us in the right direction. He might have saved us from a harmful or embarrassing mistake. We must not allow pride or ego to rob us of the opportunity to perfect ourselves as we mature in age and experience. An orchestra cannot properly perform unless the instruments are played in harmony. A football team will never win unless the players coordinate their efforts. A family cannot enjoy life together unless they pull-together. The Lord’s church cannot be the light intended by God for it to be, nor the individual members feel the closeness that should exist, unless it follows the admonition of Paul, “*Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*” (Php. 2:2). Then he adds, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves*” (v. 3). The church is composed of individuals whose lives and conduct should enhance a feeling of belonging to those within and encourage acceptance by those who view it from without.

QUALITIES WHICH PROMOTE PEACE AND UNITY

Have you noticed that often those who are avoided by others constantly complain and find fault, mostly speak in the negative, rarely compliment others for their success, and seldom smile? You feel uneasy in their presence, don’t you? Have you noticed others avoiding you? Could this perhaps be your own problem? To humbly follow Paul’s advice in Philippians 2:14-15 will surely aid in correcting this situation:

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

What a grand contribution we can make toward peace and harmony when we display the “*fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:22-23) such as “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*” all of which are in perfect accord with the will and desire of our Father.

What a blessing it would be, both for him and ourselves, when another brother “*be overtaken in a fault*” and we “*which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*” (Gal. 6:1). I do not always like what I see in the mirror; but it tells the truth. I can only adjust that image by correcting the person it reflects.

THE BENEFIT IN BEING A PEACEMAKER

“*Be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you*” (2 Cor. 13:11b).

James wrote, “*The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace*” (3:18).

Jesus Himself said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God*” (Mat. 5:9).

Many of our ills, both emotional and physical, would be eliminated if we lived in an atmosphere free from strife, but where instead peace and harmony prevailed. We ourselves, yes you and me, can be the instrument God uses in bringing this about if we will only permit His presence to control our thoughts and conduct.

Indeed, “*How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*” (Psa. 133:1)

HARRY COBB

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WISDOM HAS TWO PARTS:

1. HAVING A LOT TO SAY
2. NOT SAYING IT

GOSPEL MEETINGS

March 22 - 24	Mt. Carmel Road Gay, GA	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
March 31 - April 3	Waynesburg Waynesburg, KY	Timothy Lewis (Eubank, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. In Egypt, what did Joseph accuse his brothers of at their first meeting?
2. Under the Mosaic Law, what was the punishment for someone who hit their father?
3. Which prophet said, “*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son*”?
4. Which book of prophecy was the Ethiopian eunuch reading from?
5. What is “*friendship with the world*”, according to James?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month’s questions?

1. What was taken off and handed over to signify the agreement between Boaz and the kinsman?
A SANDAL (Ruth 4:8)
2. Who asked for an understanding heart to judge God’s people? SOLOMON (1 Kings 3:5-9)
3. Where did Jonah try to run to instead of going to Nineveh as God had commanded? TARSHISH (Jon. 1:3)
4. Who decreed that a census of the entire Roman world should be taken at the time of Jesus’ birth?
AUGUSTUS CAESAR (Luke 2:1)
5. What was Paul’s home town? TARSUS (Acts 21:39)