

UNITY UNTAINTED

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:16, 18

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:31). Cogent words to the conscientious believer! Of course, the driving force behind compliance with this instruction, is love. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us” (Ephesians 5:2a). All our efforts inspired by human strength are in vain unless accompanied by the indispensable ingredient—love.

Our apostle affirms: “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, AND HAVE NOT LOVE, I am *nothing*” (I Corinthians 13:2). Those characteristics which comprise the enablement of saints to faithfully fulfill their spiritual responsibilities are the product of the Holy Spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is LOVE, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22-23a). But like any fruit, it first must be harvested before it can generate energy. It is at our disposal, but we must be willing to make use of it to His glory. Thus Paul urges, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

Our proper testimony must take two directions: (1) Our fellowship with other believers and (2) Our association with non-believers. Regarding the first, we are encouraged to “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things....Be not wise in your own conceits.” Of the second: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

REH

Notes:

TO STRIVE OR NOT TO STRIVE

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:29, II Timothy 2:24

One of the cardinal rules in the study of Scripture is “considering what goeth before and what followeth after” (quoted from Miles Coverdale). The Apostle Paul devotedly attests that he is “striving according to His [Christ’s] working, which worketh in me mightily.” Yet, shortly thereafter, Paul writes to Pastor Timothy, “The servant of the Lord must not strive.”

Have we, then, a dilemma—a contradiction? By no means! Considering “what goeth before and what followeth after,” we find that the entire context of the first quotation is “God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, STRIVING [contending, agonizing] ACCORDING TO HIS WORKING, which worketh in me mightily.”

The full statement of Paul to Timothy also clarifies the meaning. “Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT STRIVE [quarrel, dispute]; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.”

In keeping with our theme of spiritual unity, we find instruction from the apostle commensurate with his admonition to Timothy. “Let your conversation [manner of life] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ....Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving [laboring] together...” (Philippians 1:27).

REH

Notes:

BEWARE THE DETRACTOR!

Scripture Reading: Romans 16:17-18

In the interest of preserving unity among the Body members, we are adjured to guard against contrary influence. Paul voiced his concern to the Corinthian church with strong warning. "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ....For such [fraudulent teachers] are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (II Corinthians 11:3, 13-15a).

To the Colossian saints, Paul sent these words of caution: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding [fast] the Head [Christ]" (Colossians 2:18-19a).

Particularly those Body members who are established in the truths of the Pauline gospel must be wary on behalf of the full Body. Paul pleads, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly."

REH

Notes:

THE BELIEVERS' WARFARE

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 6:11, 17

The battle lines are drawn. God has established the one true Church, the Body of Christ. The Body members, of which the Church is formed, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. We are guardians of the faith, charged with defending and preserving the righteousness "which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9). We are not promised an easy victory. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution....For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (II Timothy 3:12, Philippians 1:29).

God gives us the armor. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." God gives us the weaponry. "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." In the end, God gives us victory! "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).

The redemptive work of Christ has been completed. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His [God our Saviour's] mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). Now we are charged with the responsibility to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called...endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1b, 3).

REH

Notes:

COMING IN GLORY

Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:27, 24:30

Before His death the Lord prayed to the Father, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

This glorification occurred when the Lord ascended up on high and led captivity captive. It is thus now that He dwells in glory, and as members of the Body of Christ we look for the time when we shall be glorified and our body made like unto His glorified body (Phil. 3:21).

The promise which is made in Matthew 16:27 and then referred to again in Matthew 24:30, is not the promise of the glorification of the members of the Body of Christ at the Rapture of the Church, but rather the promise of Christ returning to the earth clothed in glory to establish His kingdom. (Read Matthew 16:27).

In Matthew 24:29, in particular, we find that the coming of the Lord in glory, is to occur immediately after the tribulation of those days. It will in fact be the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will come a second time to the earth. This time not as a babe in a manger, but rather clothed in the glory which He and the Father share in common, which glory He left to come in a body of flesh and blood to become the once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the many.

His second coming to the earth as is indicated in Matthew 16:27 and 24:30, will be in glory and in power, to judge the righteous and the sinners, and to reward every man according to his works.

According to the testimony of Scripture we as members of His Body, will have been raptured, changed, and glorified long before the second coming of Christ.

Kenneth Parker

Notes:

HIS PROMISE DELAYED

Scripture Reading: II Peter 3:9

In this final letter of the apostle Peter we notice that the tone is strongly prophetic. The strains of prophetic truth are seen: (1) The coming of scoffers who are false teachers and prophets (chapter 2), (2) The coming of the day of the Lord (chapter 3). It is interesting to note that these scoffers ridicule particularly the truth of "the promise of His coming" (3:4). Why? Was the Lord actually "slack concerning His promise?" Would He actually not keep His word on this point and be human and change His mind? Would the announcements of Peter both on that notable day of Pentecost and shortly after, that Joel's prophecy was about to be fulfilled and Jesus Christ would return to bring in "the great and the terrible day of the Lord," (please turn to Joel 2:28-3:1 and Acts 2:16-21 and Acts 3:12-26) all become so much "pie in the sky?" God forbid! "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar!" He will keep His promise! He will come again! He will bring in the great day of the Lord! He will restore His people Israel!! He will reign over the house of Jacob! He will do all He has promised! But WHY the delay? The answer is seen in 2 Peter 3:15-18!

Through the epistles of "our beloved brother Paul" we learn that a hiatus has occurred in the program of God in relation to Israel and the day of the Lord. He has set that favored nation aside due to her persistent unbelief and rebellion, and has brought in "the economy of the secret" (Eph. 3:2,9) wherein the longsuffering of God is granting a guilty world a time of grace whereby all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ might be saved and joined to Him as members of His body, the church. After this body is complete and raptured into Glory, then His delay will last no longer!

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Notes:

THE PROMISE TO ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:39, Romans 9:4, 15:8

In studying God's Book it is necessary to distinguish the things that differ, but it is also necessary to recognize the sweeping inter-dispensational continuity, revealing the consistency of God. Saints of all dispensations have been saved from the same thing, but not all saints of all dispensations are saved unto the same thing. The promises included in the Gospel of the Circumcision may be expressed as the "Hope of Israel," whereas the promises of the Gospel of the Grace of God, revealed to Paul, primarily the Rapture, is definitely called by Paul "The Blessed Hope."

So, in determining the realization of the earthly promises made to Israel we must learn that they will be realized only at the second coming of Christ at the end of the tribulation period, when He returns to this earth, according to prophecy.

In determining the realization of the heavenly promises made to the Body of Christ we must learn that they will be realized only at the Rapture of the Church before the tribulation period, when He comes in the clouds, according to the secret revealed to Paul. (Read carefully I Cor. 15:51-58). We are not bound for the promised land. The circumcision believers are. The circumcision believers are not headed for the New Heavens, but rather the New Jerusalem and the New Earth. I may visit the New Jerusalem and the New Earth in eternity, but my home, along with all saints of this dispensation, will be the New Heavens. Thanks be unto God for our calling!

Leroy P. Dority

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