

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Necessity of Love and Forgiveness

Paul the apostle said that love "does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:5-7).

When we have been wronged, solutions that seek to get even or that assume the worst about others are unloving. If we accept what Paul said about love, we must accept an attitude that is honest about problems, and willing to address problems even if it exposes failings on our part. We must also be willing to forgive the mistakes of the past to move forward. Most of the discussions in our culture lack this attitude, and these discussions will continue to fail in bringing people together. In fact, the absence of the kind of love that Paul described is to blame for the absence of solutions in our world.

Forgiveness is a key factor in our love for others. If there was no sufficient price to pay for the wrongs that we committed against God, then there is probably no sufficient price to pay for the wrongs that we commit against others. There is only a commitment to repentance, given in good faith, and complete forgiveness on our part to move toward a better relationship. This is how God forgives us in Christ. True repentance requires a commitment to stop doing things that are wrong, and true repentance will mean giving back what we have taken or working to minimize the harm of our actions. We don't get to enjoy the fruits of sinful behavior. Yet, the offended can and should meet offenders halfway by graciously refusing to exact the full penalty from those who are honestly seeking reconciliation because this is how we would want to be treated. This is love and it is an exercise of great power. Those who came to Jesus for healing often asked Him to have mercy on them. Thus, mercy should never be thought of as weakness.

Another problem that is realized by the absence of love and forgiveness is that none of us can live without offense. An eye for an eye is a good standard for judges who are trying to decide court cases, but if anyone was actually held to the standard of an eye for an eye perfectly no one would be able to keep both of their eyes or all of their teeth.

Retaliation only perpetuates a cycle of abuse and mistreatment (Matthew 5:38-42). Jesus said that we should love even our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. In doing this, we follow the example of God Himself. This is the only path to peace with God and peace with ourselves. Can you envision any joy in the life of a person who is trying to keep up with all of the eyes and the teeth that people supposedly owe them? Do we want to be constantly looking over our shoulders for those who may be coming for our eyes and our teeth? No. We can forgive and we can have peace knowing that God has forgiven us and that we are walking in His love.

If we believe in Jesus, then we should realize that human governments are very limited in producing great solutions to the problems of humanity. There are things that we can debate and defend through political dialogue, but until we can make Biblical love the starting point for our discussions there is no reason to think that these discussions will produce permanent solutions. Individuals can be converted and this will be reflected in the culture, but we can't expect the world to act like the church. It is hard enough for the church to consistently act like the church.

The gospel overcomes the groups that divide us: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Therefore, Christians must treat people as individuals, and we must be willing to extend love and forgiveness to everyone. We don't hold individuals accountable for the sins of history or the sins of a group. The consequences of bad actions can be generational, but guilt is not. Peace and reconciliation requires honesty about the past, but it also requires a willingness to forgive. In reality, none of us can completely pay the price for the bad things that we have done to God and to others, even when we do all that we can to minimize the harm of our actions. God loved us and offered us forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Love will bring people together in a meaningful way through forgiveness, but without love we will always just be people who happen to occupy the space next to one another.

- Tadd Corder

A Word of Caution

Brethren, if you are planning on buying a new NIV Bible, there is something you need to be aware of. Their first translation came out in 1973, and was followed by a revision in 1997. The '97 version was a "gender inclusive" rendering, and died quickly. A gender inclusive version involves the elimination of masculine pronouns when they were intended to include both sexes.

The NIV publisher, Zondervan, has now brought out a newer attempt to appeal to those who find the masculine pronouns objectionable. They will no longer produce the older NIV.

As an example of what they have done, note 1 John 4:16: "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them." The NASV reads: "God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." The NIV not only does not follow the original pronouns, but it doesn't even use good grammar, as it has a singular "whoever" and then a plural "them." Furthermore, it changes the sense of a personal relationship with the Father to an abstract collective.

Revelation 3:20: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Poor grammar again, mixing singular and plural parts of the sentence. The NASV reads: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."

1 Timothy 2:12 tampers with the meaning. The NASV reads: "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." But the new NIV renders the passage to read that the woman is not to "assume authority over a man." There is a big difference. The NIV could lead one to think that if the man "gave permission," for the woman to preach, then she has not "assumed" the authority, but has been granted the right.

So ... although the NIV has been quite popular, you need to be aware of the changes in the new editions.

- David Tant

PAUL, THE AUTHORITATIVE APOSTLE

Judaizing teachers, false teachers and enemies of the truth attempted to gain a following by preaching a "different gospel" (2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6). They used a common tactic right out of Satan's toolbox: personal attacks in an attempt to discredit the opposition. One form of attack that was used against Paul was to disparage his claim to be an apostle of Christ. But Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God (Galatians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 9:1-2; etc.).

Paul stated "For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles." (2 Corinthians 11:5). The context, especially verses 3 and 4, seems to indicate that his

reference to eminent apostles was to the antagonistic false preachers who were pretending to have authority and attempting to lead the Corinthians astray "from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." It would certainly be outside the doctrine of Christ for any of the twelve or Paul to exalt himself or allow himself to be exalted above the others (Matthew 20:25-27). Any apostle of Christ would have been appreciated more by a Christian who may have been better acquainted with him personally, by conversion or by reputation, which would be somewhat of a natural response of gratitude (cf. Galatians 2:9). But the apostles of Christ all had equal authority granted to them by Christ and certified by the Holy Spirit. False apostles had no credentials and taught a destructive message. No apostle of Christ would have allowed himself to be exalted above the others.

Paul quoted his critics in 2 Corinthians 10:10, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible." Could it be that others were more eloquent in speech, such as Apollos? Yes. Could it be that Paul lacked some professional status as a speaker? Maybe. Paul had already said to them, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). So for comparison of preachers with different speaking abilities, Paul reminded them, "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." (1 Corinthians 3:5-7).

Paul's words were emphatic: "So then let no one boast in men." (1 Corinthians 3:21). Divisions in the body that proceed from personal admiration of one's speaking ability over another's are carnal and sinful (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3-4; 12:12, 18, 22-27).

The important thing was that these apostles and preachers taught "the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16). Preachers do not need eloquence, but they must possess knowledge of God's word. When men speak "Thus saith the Lord ...," they speak by heaven's authority, and their message should be believed and obeyed. Such was Paul, who by the Lord's authority built up the body of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:8).

- Gary Smalley

* "If Jesus is in your heart, please tell your face!"

- * "If you see someone without a smile, give them yours!"
 - * "If you want your neighbor to see what Christ can do for him, let him see what Christ did for you!"
 - * "If you're looking up to God you won't be looking down on people!"
 - * "If you're a Christian, earth is the only hell you'll ever know! If you're not a Christian, earth is the only heaven you'll ever know!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)