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One Another's Well-Being

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The church at Corinth struggled in a variety of ways. As Paul writes to them, one particular principle seems to surface frequently. They are admonished to look out for one another's well-being. Do we do so?

Whether issues relating to eating meat offered to idols, tarrying one for another when observing the Lord's Supper, marriage relationships, spiritual gifts, filing lawsuits against brethren, or immorality among them, one admonition resonates repeatedly. In sundry ways, they were told, "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being" (1 Cor. 10:24).

Upon this principle hinges much of the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:30-31. Simply stated, we cannot love God without loving one another (1 John 4:20-21).

Seeking one another's well-being is definitely not sacrificing or scarcely considering the concerns of others to attain our own desires. It is also not merely avoiding pressing our own wants and needs instead of giving thought to others first. The love God shows us ought to compel us to actually sacrifice for one another, putting the concerns and interests of others above our own. When this happens, there will be others putting our concerns and interests above their own. Brethren will be looking out for brethren. Brotherly love will continue (Heb. 13:1).

The apostle Paul told the Philippians, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but also the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). All it takes is one brother selfishly and conceitedly pursuing his own above others to undermine the most precious and essential spirit of brotherly love that must exist among us.

We easily forget that it is our love and care for one another that sets us apart from the world and marks us most distinctively as His disciples. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35). Trussville 1/13/20

Bad Company

"Do not be deceived; bad company corrupts good morals." This warning in 1 Corinthians 15:33 is given in light of extending fellowship to those who do not accept the core doctrine of resurrection. Some so-called believers at Corinth doubted that resurrection is possible. The persons they hung out with, listened to, and endorsed promoted this agenda. If there is no resurrection, then there is no need to be moral. The moral code which we see in Jesus means nothing if the body shall not be raised immortal. Paul is concerned with this teaching throughout this chapter. The point I wish to make is this: the persons you associate with (extend spiritual fellowship by way of endorsement) begin to alter your own standing with God. If you disagree with a root issue like resurrection, then what fellowship can be had? Paul picks up on this in 2 Corinthians 6: "What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?" We must be attentive to the persons and organizations which we 'keep company' with.

Paul describes in Romans 1 the evils which mankind has pursued apart from God. At the end of the chapter, Paul extends a warning to those who know better. "Although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." We

can become guilty of vile evils even by extending 'hearty approval.' That is to say, if our company lives a corrupt life, then our renewed fellowship with them can follow two paths: either we will validate their evil behaviors, or we will join their evil behaviors. What then? How are we to dis-associate from a world of evil when it is all around us? May we not have family or friends of the world? May we not eat with or join business with non-Christians? Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 5 "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; not with the immoral people of this world...for then you would have to leave the earth, but actually I wrote not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person." As long as we recognize and give our worldly associates full disclosure that we are not like them and that we do not believe or live their way, then there is no inherent danger of being guilty by association. Even Jesus 'ate and drank with sinners' without giving approval to their deeds.

The warning about 'so-called brothers' must be examined. It is possible, in light of these passages, to have those who claim the same faith, but live contrary to it. Can we extend fellowship to such? We cannot. Such fellowship of endorsement enables them to continue in their evil ways. We must find ways of lovingly and patiently drawing a line which cannot be crossed. In fact, Christ has already drawn it for us. It is not up to us to define evil based on our opinion, rather it is up to us to adhere to Christ's stated views. John warns us in his second letter "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teachings of Christ does not have God...If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house and to not give a greeting, for he who gives a greeting participates in his evil deed." The 'greeting' and 'receiving' do not refer to caring for human necessities (if your enemy is hungry: feed him! – Rom 12:20) or respect (Honor all men- 1 Pet 2:17; show consideration for all men – Tit 3:2) but an extension of brotherhood which communicates that you believe they are in the right. If we have 'brethren' who share such fundamentally different doctrines that it warps their morals, or if they bring teachings apart from or beyond the teachings of Christ, then we must mark that line of difference.

What are we to do with so-called brethren? While we cannot extend to them the right hand of fellowship (Gal 2:9), we can certainly appeal to them in the name of Christ. We can lovingly take them aside and explain the way of Christ more accurately. We can attempt to 'snatch them out of the fire,' (Jude 23). We ought to always leave the door of opportunity open to discuss the most important issues. We may even have an ongoing relationship with them as we do with those in the world. But if we keep company with (to the point of overlooking their behavior) or 'greet' (by way of extending endorsement of their spiritual state) then we can be sure that our own morals shall become suspect. Christ does not want us to be grumpy haters who look down on others. He does not want us to puff ourselves up. He simply wants us to do what is right and communicate His standards and His teachings to the world. If we are doing this in love and with respect, then no one will question where our true loyalty lies.

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