



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## Reinstated?

~by Bill Hall

We are hearing some rather strange expressions these days. A man was telling us recently that he had gone forward the Sunday before to be "reinstated." A woman said she was thinking of "going back into the church." Are such expressions a problem in terminology? Or are we faced with a problem in concept? Are people thinking of the church as an organization similar to the P.T.A., in and out of which they can go at will, returning simply to be "reinstated"?

Unfaithfulness is not just a matter of dropping out of the church for a while. It is a matter of trampling "the Son of God underfoot"; of insulting "the Spirit of grace"; of giving "occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme"; of turning one's back on the Lord and His promises; of living in sin and flirting with eternal damnation. Imagine a person's being in such a position, and then coming forward to be "reinstated"!!! What that person needs to do is repent, fall on his knees before God, confess to Him and to his brethren, "I have sinned," and cry to God for mercy.

We are not questioning God's mercy. He is prepared to forgive His wayward child; to run to him, fall on his neck, and kiss him; to place the best robe on his back, a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet; to kill the fatted calf and be merry. But this abundant forgiveness is for that wayward child who returns with a full recognition of his sin and unworthiness, who confesses his sins, who asks, not to be "reinstated" as a son, but to be received back only as a hired servant. Forgiveness is for the penitent. May the Lord help us to see sin in its true ugliness, to "abhor what is evil" and "cling to what is good," to remember the price paid by our Lord for our forgiveness, to be faithful, and to humbly acknowledge our sins when we do fall. And when we are forgiven, let us not speak glibly of "going back into the church," but let us speak of the grace of God that could save "a wretch like me."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

## PERSONAL BUT NOT PRIVATE

by Andy Diestelkamp

It is popular to think that one's relationship with Christ is *personal*, yet clarification is needed as to what this means. *Personal* often carries with it the connotation of a *private* and/or unique relationship that excludes others. Thus, to an inquiry about a delicate topic, someone might reply that it is "none of your business" on the grounds that it is *personal*. However, *personal* can also mean particularly involved or connected to someone or something. Thus, to say you put in a *personal* appearance at an event or received a *personal* invitation does not necessarily mean that it was private but was specific and particular.

It is important that a relationship with Jesus Christ be *personal* in the sense that each Christian is specifically and particularly connected to Jesus through His gracious sacrifice on his/her behalf and his/her faithful response to His invitation. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26,27). The intimacy of trust (faith) "in Christ Jesus" to the extent that we "put on Christ" in baptism certainly conveys that one is personally connected with Christ. "As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death...we were buried with Him through baptism into death" (Rom. 6:3,4). Our relationship with Jesus is nothing if it is not personal. However, Jesus never intended His relationship with us to be private, secret, or unshared with others.

A personal relationship with Jesus, while critical for our own salvation, actually connects us to others who are also personally connected to Jesus. This is clearly illustrated in what Paul refers to as "the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12) of which

Christ is head (v. 15) and Paul further describes as, “the whole body, joined and knit together by what *every joint* supplies, according to the effective working by which *every part* does its share, causing growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (v. 16).

This describes the unity to which all followers of Christ are called in “one body” (vv. 1-6). Being united with Christ means being united with others. We can’t have a *personal* relationship with Christ without being a part of His body, His people, His church (1:22,23).

Our personal connection to Christ impacts our connections to one another. In writing to the carnally-divided group of Christians in Corinth, Paul had to remind everyone that because Christ is *not* divided, neither should they be divided (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3,4). Yet division was (and still is) rampant among professing Christians because of worldly attitudes and behaviors which do not conform to Christ.

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Paul also used the “body” imagery to illustrate and remind the saints in Corinth of the practical value of diversity of function even as there is unity of faith and purpose (12:12-31). So, while “by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...the body is not one member but many” (vv. 13,14). Christians always need to remember that we “are the body of Christ, and members individually” (v. 27). Paul is not saying that the group in Corinth (or any such group) constituted “the body of Christ,” but he *is* using the saints’ professed common connection to Christ’s body to challenge them to work together with one another in a way that is Christ-like and in accord with the mind of Christ.

Being reminded of our personal connection to Christ in His body equips us for the work of service in the many other relationships we have including our marriages, households, working relationships, local congregations, and even those outside of Christ (cf. Col. 3:1-4:6). One’s relationship with Christ is personal but not private because, ideally, it connects Christians to one another and seeks to share the gospel so that others will likewise connect to Jesus Christ. Think Magazine April – May – June 2022 Vol. 53 No. 2

## Kindness

A fruit of the Spirit is kindness. Galatians 5:22 Being kind to others even in difficult circumstances can be challenging but it is right way for the child of God. A favorable attitude is always appreciated instead of a sour disposition. How you treat someone else can make a big difference in their day. Think about cutting someone off in traffic verses letting someone out in front of you. How about a kind complement about a something someone has done right veres a harsh complaint about something someone has done wrong.

When you think about Jesus, it is impossible to invision Him being unkind to anyone. One of my favorite things said about Jesus is found in Acts 10:38, he “...went about doing good...”. You can’t be doing good, if you are being unkind.

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