

# Fulton County Gospel News

*Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World*

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

Established 1953

February 2007

Vol. 41 / No. 2

## PRINCIPLES OF RECONCILIATION

by Gary W. Summers

Some things ought to make us nervous, such as not doing what the Scriptures teach. Does it really matter what the disobedience is? It could be the refusal to repent of sins; it could be the neglecting of good works; it might be balking at baptism; perhaps it involves the reluctance to assemble with the saints on the first day of the week. Or it might be the refusal to reconcile a problem with one's brother.

Jesus wanted to make certain that problems would not persist in the church; therefore, He provided various principles to resolve the conflicts which will always be occurring. The following Scriptures with appropriate applications are commended to all brethren everywhere who have suffered problems (in other words, most of us).

1. **If you have been offended, go to the person responsible.** Jesus, in Matthew 18:15-17, did not say to tell everyone else the problem; talk to the person involved. It just may be a miscommunication that can be settled easily. If not, however, every word can be established with witnesses. This approach does not leave matters lying around, not having been dealt with for years.
2. **If you know that a brother has “something against you,” go and resolve the situation**

**immediately.** You initiate contact. The Lord stressed that one leave his gift at the altar and get the matter straightened out—that is how urgent and important it is (Matthew 5:23-24). Silence between brethren is not an acceptable option.

3. **Do not be a stumbling block to your brother.** The apostle Paul preferred never to eat meat again if it made his brother stumble. Tolerance and humility go much further than arrogance and close-mindedness. Notice the fervency of Paul's plea: *“And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ”* (1 Corinthians 8:11-12).
4. **“Love one another.”** Who does not know that Jesus taught His disciples to love one another, as He loved them? (John 13:34-35). Is something so familiar easily overlooked? Frequently when problems occur between brethren, people's feelings get hurt, and this commandment falls by the wayside. Some may even intentionally wish harm upon another, which may be a natural response, but it is not a spiritual one.

John warns that the one who *“hateth his brother is in darkness even until now”* and *“walketh in darkness”* (1 John 2:9-11). One who does not love his brother *“knoweth not God, for God is love”* (4:8); furthermore, for this individual to insist that he loves God makes him a liar (4:20).

One of the things people do who love others is to bear with them and forgive them their trespasses. Is it love to lash out at someone for whom there is no personal attachment because of certain actions when, if the same deed had been committed by a family member or close friend, the matter would have been resolved quickly and quietly? Making a distinction between how we treat brethren (using a double standard) is indicative of losing one's partiality and objectivity. Certainly, such attitudes will stand in the way of reconciliation.

5. **We must be willing to forgive if we expect to be forgiven.** Most of the time, when a brother who has offended us humbly repents, everyone rejoices, and forgiveness is granted. Jesus, however, knew that it would be withheld by some. Therefore, He made our forgiveness from God contingent on our forgiveness of others (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35). Unfortunately, in

**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

USPS Publication #211780

. . . is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

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**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

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Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

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Hosted by TheBible.net

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our day and time, it is uncommon for people to own up to their wrongs. Some immediately become defensive and rationalize or refuse to talk at all. Sins against brethren, however, need to be repented of like any other sin. It is neither right nor pleasing to God to say, "I'll just let that go."

6. **Problems cannot be rationalized away.** Paul did not say of Peter's wrong behavior in Galatians 2: "Oh, he's just having a bad day." He had to be confronted concerning it. Sinful behavior cannot be overlooked amongst friends or even fellow apostles. On another occasion Peter had to rebuke Simon the Sorcerer for his desire to have power not granted unto him. Whatever he

may have done afterward, at least he deserves credit for his response in Acts 8:24: "*Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.*" Simon did not seek to justify or defend his actions. He did not blame someone else. On those occasions when we have said or done the wrong thing, we should admit it.

7. **Problems can only be settled on the basis of truth.** No one can be forgiven on the basis that he is another brother's friend or relative, has other fine attributes, possesses tremendous influence, or has a great deal of money. Problems resolved in those ways compromise the truth, which all gospel preachers are committed to defending. Only by continuing in the Word can we know and practice the truth (John 8:31-32). Unfortunately, many personal conflicts can be reduced to "he said . . . he said" situations. In the midst of conflicts, some begin to judge motives, which only compounds the problem. As much debris as possible should be cleared away to concentrate on the main offense.

We ought to be impressed with these and other principles of conflict resolution that our Lord placed within the Scriptures. How can we speak of unity and peace when unresolved situations continually confront us? All of us ought to be concerned about being peacemakers.

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**HOW TO RECEIVE THE PRIZE**

by Lee Moses

Christians labor in the kingdom, living the Christian life, that God might be glorified and that souls of others might be saved. However, there is also an inestimable prize that they all desire to obtain for themselves—the prize of eternal life in heaven. Not that it is a prize that they desire to hoard to themselves; it is not a prize with a limited number of recipients. While "*they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize*" (1 Corinthians 9:24), in the Father's house are "*many mansions*" (John 14:2). But even with a potentially limitless number of recipients of the heavenly prize, very few will receive it. When Jesus was asked, "*Lord, are there few that be saved?*", He replied, "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*" (Luke 13:23-24). Even the faithful apostle Paul knew that he could become "*a castaway*" ("*disqualified*," New King James Version) from receiving the heavenly prize (1 Corinthians 9:27).

But by no means did Paul resign himself to disqualification—he doggedly and determinedly pushed forward that he might receive his prize. And he strove for his prize according to a plan:

*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the*

*mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 3:13-14).

### FORGET

The ability to forget could be considered a truly Christian virtue. No, not the ability to forget where you parked your car, or to forget a person's name thirty seconds after you meet. But the ability to put out of the mind useless distractions that could easily become focal points can keep our major task from becoming unnecessarily difficult.

Before he obeyed the Gospel, Paul was the envy of the Jews. He was of high birth, the best training, exceptional ability, directed ambition; and because of this he was able to say, "[I] profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation" (Galatians 1:14; compare with Phil. 3:4-6). But once Paul became a follower of Jesus Christ, his previous achievements and goals could no longer dominate his desires. And they did not: "*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*" (Phil. 3:7-8). But Paul goes beyond saying those things were "loss"; he goes beyond saying those things were "dung"—he says they were **forgotten** (verse 13).

There are things that we all need to put behind us; there are things that we need to "forget" when we become Christians. Like Paul, we may need to put our past

accomplishments behind us. Especially is this so if our "accomplishments" were actually contrary to the cause of Christ (compare with Acts 26:9-11). In addition to past accomplishments, we need to forget past failures. Sometimes people get it in their heads that they are doomed to failure. Of course, if that remains their attitude, they **are** doomed to failure.

We need to forget the past pleasures of sin. When one repents, he turns his back on all those ways that are repugnant to God, though that person may once have derived pleasure from them. "*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings ("drinking parties," NKJV), and abominable idolatries*" (1 Peter 4:3). We need to forget the times others have wronged us and have refused to repent. True, there can be no real forgiveness without repentance (Luke 17:3-4); but for one to go on harboring grudges hurts oneself far greater than the transgressor.

### FOCUS

Once one has put aside any unnecessary mental, emotional, and spiritual baggage, he is now ready to apply himself to the task at hand. When running a race, an athlete cannot be distracted by the spectators, other runners, or by his own anxiety. Every inch of his body and every thought of his mind are given to his goal. Likewise, Paul single-mindedly strove for his goal, "*reaching forth unto those things which are before.*" He spoke of himself as doing just "*one thing*" (Phil. 3:13).

If we desire to receive our heavenly prize, we must also single-mindedly strive for the goal. The Hebrews writer exhorts, ". . . *let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*" (Heb. 12:1-2). To run the Christian race, any sins that arise must be addressed as quickly as possible, before they grow into greater problems. Paul knew that self-discipline was crucial to his receiving the prize (1 Cor. 9:25-27).

Also, the common encumbrances of life must be set aside as much as possible. While focusing on the minutiae of life, one can find the direction of his life completely altered from its heavenly course. There can be so many cares that fill our lives that we no longer have any place for the main thing. Jesus said, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*" (Matthew 6:33, emphasis LM). We must keep the main thing the main thing.

### FINISH

The calling of God is a **high**, or "**upward**" (NKJV), calling. Some believe in a "plateau religion." The Judaizing teachers Paul opposed taught, "Climb up to this point, and you are safe. Be circumcised, keep this list of commandments, and Heaven is yours."<sup>1</sup> Some today convince themselves, "I have done enough; Heaven is my sure reward." Such people might want to ask themselves, "Have I done more for the Lord than the apostle

Paul?" In Philippians 3:12-13, Paul repeats emphatically that he has **not** yet arrived at his destination; he has **not** yet achieved his goal.

There are so many who enter the Christian race, but simply never finish. "The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry." Some simply lose their focus—they "*are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection*" (Luke 8:14). Others apparently come to decide that the Christian life is impossible to live. It is difficult—"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Heb. 10:36, NKJV)—but it is by no means impossible. As a matter of fact, the apostle Peter tells us that if you are consistently adding the Christian graces to your life, "*ye shall never fall*" (2 Pet. 1:10). He warns about one who fails to add them, "*But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*" (verse 9). Such a person has lost his focus and his way, and thus has no hope of finishing. But if one begins correctly, in faith (verse 5); and continues correctly, by progressively adding virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (verses 5-7); he is assured to finish.

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

**CONCLUSION**

There is nothing shameful in desiring to receive the heavenly prize. The only shame will be for those who fail to receive it when they could have. The apostle Paul

by inspiration wrote of his plan to receive the prize by **forgetting, focusing, and finishing**. As we obey the Gospel (Romans 6:3-4), let us be willing to forget our past, all the while embracing our present in confident expectation of the future.

<sup>1</sup> Gary Summers, "Pressing on Toward the Goal," in *Studies in Philippians and Colossians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications), p. 147.

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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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 Paid At  
 Mammoth Spring, AR  
 72554-9998  
 Publication #211780