

DISAGREEMENT AND THE SILENT TREATMENT Continued from page 1

Diotrephes, John tells us, loved to have the pre-eminence. John could have said, "Don't worry about it, it is no big deal. He'll probably get over it if you just ignore him." Or, John could have just praised the good man Demetrius and ignored the problem of Diotrephes entirely. He didn't. He told the brethren: "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth..." (3 John 10). If John were able to come, he had no intention of giving the "Diotrephes matter" the silent treatment. Brethren today should not expect other brethren to give an issue caused by a single man the silent treatment either!

Who can help being reminded of the words of Paul: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Some might say, "Yes Paul, if you had just kept your mouth shut we'd all be happy in harmony. So what if we are seeking to be justified by circumcision? That's not an important enough issue to get all heated up over."

Some brethren seem to think the only important issues are the ones that directly affect them. Maybe they have forgotten in the "safe harbor" of their self-spun cocoons that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor, 5:6; Gal, 5:9). Then again, maybe someday, when it is too late, they may realize that they were not only on the wrong side of the issue, but past inaction now very directly affects them. When one studies the lives and writings of the apostles, we see that every time there was an issue among the brethren, they dealt with it. There was none of this, "Let Paul or Peter or John deal with it; I am not getting involved."

All of this is not to say there are never those who raise quibbles, fables, or foolish questions for the purpose of stirring up strife. That happened in the first century. Paul warned both Timothy and Titus about it: "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife" (2 Tim. 2:23). "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain" (Tit. 3:9). Be it noted that Paul did not admonish Timothy or Titus either one to **avoid** strife or contentions, but to avoid the things that **cause** them. If the strife already exists, trying to sweep it under the carpet with the silent treatment is the wrong thing to do.

Paul dealt with myriad issues in I Corinthians. Why did he do that? Because right from the first chapter his concern was that there were divisions in the church at Corinth. The apostolic solution was not for himself or the brethren to keep their mouths shut about it, but for the Corinthians all to speak the same thing, being of the same mind and judgment (I Cor. 1:10). Having given the solution for division in general, Paul set out to instruct the brethren on how to resolve the individual issues one by one.

Obviously, none of us are apostles with the inspired answers to contentions or divisions, but you and I both are both blessed with enough sense to know that if some brother or group of brethren has an issue with us, the worst thing we can do is ignore it. That will generate more strife, leave the matter unresolved, and fragment the already fragmented body of Christ even more.

Jesus did not ignore the dispute that arose among His disciples. He knew ignoring a problem does not make it go away. Will some of us never learn from His example?

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DISAGREEMENT AND THE SILENT TREATMENT

A number of years ago two brethren were overheard by this writer discussing a certain error and the brother who was known to teach it. The two men a-greed that they would "let those crazy brethren down in Texas fight it out," then they would see how things stood. Some people, when made aware of a contention, will engage in an *ad hominem* attack against one side or the other, thus dismissing the point of contention as being unimportant. Some decide to take the silent approach about contentions, while still others will openly admit to their mistaken idea that some real differences are irrelevant and deserve the "passover."

When Jesus had passed through Galilee and came into Capernaum, He confronted His disciples with a question: "What was it that ye disputed among your-selves in the way?" (Mark 9:33). Jesus could have taken any number of approaches to that situation. He could have said, "It was probably Peter who started that whole thing, after all he's not happy unless he has something about which to be contentious." He could have said, "I will let them solve it among themselves and not get involved in it myself." Or, Jesus could have just decided that whatever the contention was (which of course He already knew) it was not important enough to involve himself in; He had more important things on His plate.

Jesus did not do any of those. He posed His question to them: "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves in the way?" Jesus realized something that many brethren do not: If there is an issue that is dividing brethren, it is not irrelevant. No brother is important enough—high and mighty enough to say, "That issue dividing those brethren is not worth my time." Who knows what would have happened if Jesus had employed a personal attack against one or more of the disciples, or had said nothing at all? In all likelihood, the twelve being mortal men like we are, the thing would have festered and grown and eventually so divided them that they would not have been able to work together.

Arrogance is an ugly thing. This writer can think of few responses to contention that demonstrate more arrogance than to assume the position that an issue is beneath one's dignity, or otherwise undeserving of his attention and participation in an attempt to resolve the matter.

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HAITIAN EARTHQUAKE

We are sure that by now all have heard of the natural disaster that occurred in the nation of Haiti just before 5.00pm on Tuesday January 12. It was a massive earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale. It was centered on the capital, Port-au-Prince. Pictures have been seen on our television screens and through our computers of the vast amount of damage.

One example of what has happened is the story of a West Virginia University graduate who is being hailed as a “hero husband” in the media after helping rescue his wife from a collapsed building in Port-au-Prince. When the earthquake hit, American journalist Frank Thorp was in an area about 100 miles north of the city. He felt the ground shake and assumed it was a small quake. He soon learned that the center of what was a huge quake was in the city where his wife was located. There was no cell service. He began a what was a six hour journey to the capital. On the way he received a terrifying ten-second call from his wife via Skype. She told him that she was trapped in the rubble. That was all she was able to communicate! He continued his journey not knowing what the outcome would be. When he finally arrived there were Haitians workers trying to get through the rubble to rescue her. He joined the effort. After about an hour of work he was able to get through a hole into the building where he saw his wife’s hand waving. She said: “Hold it together. Just get me out of here.” He, along with those helping him were able to get his wife out of the rubble where she had been trapped for ten hours.. There was another woman trapped in the building who was also rescued but she had suffered worse injuries and had to have both legs amputated.

By Friday evening the government of Haiti was saying that they had buried some 40,000 and that an additional 100,000 were assumed dead which includes a number of the some 45,000 Americans who were in the country. A massive rescue effort is underway with many nations involved with, as is usually the case, the US taking the lead both in the amount of funds designated for relief and in rescue workers and supplies. Additionally, corporate America has contributed heavily. However, much help is needed.

Although the nation of Haiti is about 80% Roman Catholic, there are Christians in this country which was already impoverished. The church in Winter Park, Florida (South Seminole Church of Christ, 5410 Lake Howell Road, Winter Park, FL 32792), where Gary Summers, a faithful preacher and friend is laboring, is spearheading efforts to provide assistance to our brethren in this nation that will go directly to them . They are in touch with a Haiti preacher in the Miami area who still has family in Haiti and are getting information from him. They will make sure that funds given are received by brethren in Haiti to relieve them in their dire distress. Any funds that can be provided would be greatly appreciated by the suffering brethren in Haiti. Even though we may be having financial difficulties during this period of recession, we are in much better shape physically than our brethren in Haiti. We would encourage any who can to contribute whatever they can to help these brethren – *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10).

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, Maomi Aaron’s sister, Leann Rogers, who is having health problems, and Lanny Niver together with his daughter and son, and Tim Smith.

Lanny Niver is still have problems with his back and also his neck. The doctor has said he needs surgery. Lanny will have a couple of surgeries over the next few weeks. Keep him in your prayers.

Please mark you calendars for January 31. We will have a pot luck meal together after morning worship. Plan to stay and eat.

A Congregation of the Lord’s Church Is Almost Certain to Grow When...

1. Each member has deep concern for the lost.
2. Each member enters worship with enthusiasm.
3. Each member is interested in improving his teaching ability.
4. Each member is interested in an aggressive Bible school.
5. Each member is personally involved in his work of soul-saving.
6. Each member lets brotherly love express itself to every other member.

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