

BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES

To a vibrant, faithful congregation, Paul wrote, “Be at peace among yourselves” (1 The. 5:13).” The command here, “be at peace,” is a present tense imperative. Practically speaking, that simply means that we are to be at peace and keep on being at peace. Further, it is a command and not an option.

Peacemakers are desperately needed in the church. There is enough hurt, harm, bickering, and bitterness. We do not need the self-willed attitude which is determined to have its way. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God” (Mat. 5:9). If you want happy days that conclude with blessed rest, “seek peace, and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:11). On the contrary, needless division will send souls to hell (Gal. 5:20-21). The book of Proverbs gives us God’s view of the war-mongers among brethren:

There are six things which Jehovah hateth; Yea, seven which are an abomination unto him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood; A heart that deviseth wicked purposes, Feet that are swift in running to mischief, A false witness that uttereth lies, **And he that soweth discord among brethren** (Pro. 6:16-19).

It takes only a little baseless slander, or a little taking sides, a smidgen of compromise, and you can have the recipe for needless division.

While we admonish brethren to *be* lovers of peace, we must also sound *a* warning. Beware of those that seek peace at any price. “If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men” (Rom. 12:18). But it is not possible for peace to reign where some are determined to support error, hold hands with false teachers, and subsequently compromise truth (1 Cor. 11:18f). Some folks just will not let true Christian peace prevail. I try to teach my children to seek peace but I surely do not want them to *grow* up to be compromisers who ignore soul-damning error. Some brethren have, over the years advocated fellowship with denominations, fellowship with adulterers, and fellowship with false teachers. They chide us for not going along and promoting peace when, in fact, the peace-party invitation they offer is written on a one-way ticket to hell.

Peace and humility go hand in hand. Some have gotten too big for their brotherhood britches. They cannot be questioned. They refuse to answer unless they can do so secretly so as to have some kind of sick “plausible deniability.” They cannot bear even the hint of an idea that they could be wrong. Nor will they engage in honest, open Bible study and exchange. Such an attitude does not make for peace in the brotherhood. Rather, pride hampers peace and nurtures division.

It is possible to have peace when all parties desire scriptural peace, love peace, and pursue peace.

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BELVEDERE BEACON

“Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)

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RELATIONSHIP, NOT RELIGION

Some time ago a denomination in Dallas, Texas, advertised its aim as “relationship, not religion.” When I read it, I thought, “At last, truth in advertising!” Actually, most of the religious groups that claim to be *Christian* have been placing “relationship” ahead of “religion” all along, but seldom do they advertise it. In fact, some of them may not even recognize that they are doing so.

What does their slogan mean? I infer that it means that their principal aim is to encourage good human relations. The slogan implies that the church members are free to believe and practice whatever pleases them in religion and to behave about any way they choose in their daily lives—as long as they maintain good “relationships” in so doing. A further implication is that they will not be “burdened” with any dogma, doctrine, or requisite practices (especially if they are taught in the Bible, no doubt).

This *version* of “Christianity is one of the many sorry ends of the old slogan: “It makes no difference what you believe, as long as you’re sincere.” If “relationship” supersedes religion, one may keep his third wife who has had four husbands as long as the two presently have a “good relationship.” In this creed it matters little what one believes about the Creation, baptism, the way God has directed men to worship Him, or the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Such are irrelevant as long as one knows how to “get along” with others.

The greater tragedy is that some congregations that wear the name, “Church of Christ,” have adopted just such an emphasis. Some congregations now boast of being havens for those involved in adulterous marriages. If these groups were honest they would no longer use *Church of Christ* on their signs. We are beginning to see integrity in this regard in some. Max Lucado renamed his Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio “Oak Hills Church” in 2003. Some of us have for years begged the elders of the North Richland Hills “Church of Christ” near Fort Worth to take this step. It is at least **approaching** honesty in this regard. Its marquee read on one occasion: you are looking for an independent community church, call - . To no one’s surprise, NR recently announced it would begin conducting a service on Saturday nights which will feature instrumental music and the “Lord’s supper Those apostates who are zealous to lead the church into fellowship with the denominations consistently soft-pedal doctrine in favor of a “irenic (peaceful) spirit” toward a relationship with men.

No one can deny the importance of correct relationships: However, even a neophyte in Bible teaching cannot miss its primary emphasis on the **right relationship with God**. It is not possible to be rightly related to one’s fellow man if he is not rightly related to God. The correct order is always peace with God, then peace with man (Mat 10:37; Luke 12:51-5; Acts 5:29; et al.). There is no peace with God without respect for the authority of His Son (Mat. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-2; 5:9; et al.). Only when one has the **right religion** (as defined by the New Testament) will he have the **right relationship** with both God and men.

Dub McClish, Denton, TX

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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OUT WITH THE NEW; IN WITH THE OLD

To most, the title of this article probably seems reversed. The phrase, “out with the old; in with the new,” is a common one. This phrase is customarily used in regard to the always changing and progressing industries of technology.

Computers, cell phones, I-pods, and Blackberries sold today will be obsolete tomorrow. New cars become “used” cars immediately after they are driven off the lot. The world’s obsession with having the newest and best (and more of it) has driven the current downturn in the U.S. economy. People were buying new cell-phones rather than paying their debts. They were buying homes with prices far exceeding their reasonable ability to pay, with no money down, and with the encouragement of liberal Congressional leaders like Reps. Barney Frank and Maxine Waters. The problem is not man’s desire to have a home, but man’s inability to be content with what he can afford (Phi. 4:11). The problem is not having things that are new, but rather it is the misplaced trust and love in the physical which leads man to do things he ought not (1 Tim. 6:10). The rich man who tore down his old barns to “build greater” (Luke 12:18) did not sin in that act. His sin was in placing his trust in himself and his earthly treasures rather than laying up for himself “treasures in heaven” (Mat. 6:20). Jesus concluded that this man’s error was that he was “not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

The same mentality has led to “new” innovations in the religious world as a means to attract and retain people who were supposed to have been converted out of such (Acts 3:19; Col. 1:13). In the minds of many, the Gospel is not powerful enough to save (Rom. 1:16) and new programs and sources of entertainment are needed to “keep up with the times.” Many in the Church are saying, “out with the old; in with the new.” There exists a solemn need for the Church to respond forcefully – “No! Out with the new; in with the old.” The prophet Jeremiah states, “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the *old paths*, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16, emphasis B.G.). Dire consequences await if there is not a restoration and return to the “old paths.” The restoration led by King Josiah should serve as an inspiring Scriptural example. The restoration began with the reading of the Word of God (2 Kin. 22:8-11). This remedy is so simple to understand, seeing that the “new” innovations being introduced in worship and practice are themselves a product of disregarding the law of God. Next, Josiah proclaimed, “out with the new.” “Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel” (2 Chr. 34:33). Josiah then proceeded to enact the “old paths” by re-instating proper and authorized worship to God (2 Chr. 35:1-19).

Sadly, our call to oust the new and return to the old will we be received the same way it was in the days of Jeremiah. “But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jer. 6:16). However, our cause is just. Let us continue to plant, water, and let God give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6) as we walk in the “old paths”.

*Brad Green
Farragut, TN*

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’ sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter, Justine Hall’s husband, Joe and Tim Smith.

Ron Wilson’s mother has not been well but is now at home. Please keep her in your prayers. Lanny Niver has been in Tennessee.

Joan Moulton’s mother, Joyce Spinks, has not been well and is now in a nursing home in the Birmingham, England area. Keep Joyce and Joan and the girls in your prayers.

Ken Chumbley arrived home safely from England about 1.00 a.m. Saturday morning. There will be a report of his work in England in next week’s bulletin.

What is Love?

Love may be the most misused word in English language. We use it to describe car boats, games, and other material things. The word should be used as a way to express the, emotion the heart. The biblical word *love* has great at strong meaning. Just read 1 Corinthians 13 and you will see what Paul wrote, *by* inspiration, concerning love. Let us see just what love is:

1. Love is silent when your words would hurt.
2. It is patience when your brother is hurt.
3. It is deafness when some scandal flows.
4. It is thoughtfulness for another woes.
5. It is courage if misfortune comes along.
6. It is hurting as others hurt.
7. It is rejoicing when others have reason to rejoice.
8. It is correction when one has done wrong.
9. It is going the extra mile for those in need.

There certainly are other things that define what love is, but we all know that nothing takes the place of love!

Author Unknown