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Things That Make For Peace

By
Irven Lee



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THINGS THAT MAKE FOR PEACE

INTRODUCTION

I was invited to Midfield in the Birmingham area in December 1983 for five lessons on things that make for peace. That church had suffered much from a major division. The elders and Ron Halbrook, who was preaching there when I was in this series, asked that I speak the truth freely on these things. The church at Midfield and the visitors that week were wonderful listeners. Tapes were made and sent to several who could not attend.

The Midfield elders and others insisted that the lessons be transcribed and printed for distribution. This tedious job of transcribing was done. I read the transcript and set out to revise and improve it. I then decided that the transcript needed to be abandoned and the written material be broadened to be more appropriate for general use. It is hoped that this effort will not be in vain but that it will be of help to some.

Many churches are busy biting and devouring themselves. The cause of Christ suffers much from this. We all need to think about things that make for peace. We plan to use all the Bible principles in this booklet that were mentioned during the series at Midfield, and many more passages will also be included. We hope to condense the material and put it into a more effective form, if possible. Our purpose will have been served if it provokes some good people to think on these things and on other Bible teaching on this subject.

There are very many passages of scripture on the subject. Evidently churches everywhere

and in every generation since the church was established in Jerusalem have needed to meditate earnestly on what the Bible says about peace among brethren. This effort, however feeble, is one effort on my part to remind my brethren of how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133:1). All of us need to watch for opportunities to exhort one another on this theme.

It is true that conservative churches in the first quarter of this century were small, weak, and given to wrangling. There was not then the unity and zeal that should have characterized people who desired to travel the narrow way that leads to life (Matt. 7:13,14). These little struggling bands had come out of the larger digressive churches that had gone after church support of the social gospel and of the societies for collecting and spending the churches' money.

Encouraging growth came to the small but stricter churches in the second quarter of this century. The societies and the social gospel came again in the third quarter of the century bringing the same division and bitterness as they did one hundred years earlier. The arguments, attitudes, and results were identical in both centuries.

My brethren now are too much like those churches in the first quarter of this century. Maybe a happy period of growth and strength will show up in a very few years. History is repeating itself thus far. Let us hope that the growth chapter will be again included in the history. The pure gospel is still powerful, and the plan the Lord suggested for His people is best. He set up nothing larger than the local church to carry on His spiritual work. Let us

work and pray in the effort to do Bible things in Bible ways and to call Bible things by Bible names.

Many strong and devout young people are among us now, and this can give hope for the future. People are accepting the gospel in areas where knowledge of the word and respect for it were not evident a few years ago.

There is an upswing of moral consciousness in our sinsick world. Some people seem to be awakening to the terrible things humanism has done to our nation. The fight is on against this atheism. Let us hope and pray that truth may again have free course in this country, and that many may be found that are unashamed of the faith who will proclaim it from the housetops. As we wait for a better day let us follow after things that make for peace so that we can get the house in order on the inside.

In this little book we seek to mention some things that make for peace. We also plan to refer to a few things that bring trouble. It is our desire that each reader will go ahead on his own and think of more things that should be mentioned. What about writing them down on paper? I would be glad to hear from you and see your added comments. This is an important subject, and it deserves much thought.

Those who have little respect for the Bible, and do not recognize it as the word of God, will find little use for this booklet. This is written for believers who love the church for which Christ died and which is described in the New Testament.

PROPER AND IMPROPER CONTROVERSY

We should all recognize that a certain bit of controversy is inevitable if there is to be growth and if the church is to be kept pure. Faithful servants of the Lord are to go out into an unbelieving world and earnestly contend for the faith. Reproving and rebuking are in order when error in practice or in doctrine appear. Christ and the apostles fought a good fight. They were worthy controversialists. They abhorred sin and opposed it, and so should we.

The church at Jerusalem was not destroyed when there was "much disputing" over the necessity of the Gentiles keeping the Jewish ordinances (Acts 15:7). Brethren then studied and taught calmly and avoided bitterness, so the serious question was resolved and unity that pleased the apostles and the whole church prevailed (Acts 15:22). Brethren, we should be able to differ without anger and malice as we study topics about which there are differences in understanding.

Avoiding foolish and unlearned questions would do much to avoid the envy and strife and the useless and improper controversy. This requires skill in discernment to separate truth from the error, and there should be special concern for the humble babe in Christ who does not understand.

It is a very significant danger signal when brethren begin to object to all study of subjects about which there is controversy. Truth can be tried in the fire of debate, but error thrives under the wet blanket of "no controversy allowed." Heresy is brought in "privily" (2 Peter 2:1). Let some vigilant elder or preacher cry aloud when some perverse doctrine or practice is slipping into the family. Let us pray

that we may come to learn by studying topics which are not understood by all rather than developing factions with closed minds and bitterness. There will, of course, always be different levels of understanding between the babes in Christ and the well taught giants among us. The "great plainness of speech" is used to help (2 Cor. 3:12). Please do not object to that which is necessary to the spiritual well being of the church.

TRIALS AND COMPENSATIONS

When envy, wrath, and stife come to the point of explosion in one community those who have tried hardest to walk in the light feel betrayed and frustrated. Each feels that people in other communities cannot imagine how they were treated and what was said about them, but these people in other areas do understand if such a root of bitterness has also come where they live. It is beyond our understanding how brethren can be so bitter and do so many ugly things that are contrary to the teaching of Christ. James implied that even lying and every evil work can come with such explosions (James 3:14-18). Angry people may become mad men (insane). Reason, self control, love, and patience disappear. In such intense battles there may be grievous error on both sides because it is next to impossible for the best of men to come through without scars.

It is easy to see that Paul and other apostles and early Christians went through trying times from their fellow countrymen, officials of government, and from false brethren (2 Cor. 11:23-30). We have suffered so little in comparison to their testing which was as by fire, that we should complain less (1 Peter 1:7-9).

We should take courage and move forward rather than giving up in failure. We also need to confess our own failures and strive to be stronger for later testings.

Christians have times of great temptations, but they have many happy associations, hope, counsel from the scriptures, and encouragement from wonderful brethren. They receive a hundred fold in rewards in this life in comparison with their sacrifices, and there is the eternal reward in the world to come. (Please read Mark 10:28-30; 1 Tim. 4:8-11; 2 Tim. 4:7.) Paul, who suffered much often wrote of joy, thanksgiving, and peace that passes understanding. Even the Christ was helped through the terrible abuse at the time of His crucifixion by the "joy that was set before him" (Heb. 12:2). I know of no work that could have possibly brought greater rewards to me than the work of preaching the gospel, which I have done for more than fifty years.

"Therefore we do not lose heart, even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed

up by life. Now he who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 4:6-5:8 NKJ).

Passages like the above should help us to have the peace within which the unbelieving world cannot understand. Martyrs who have amazed their generations by their courage and peace in the face of death have found their strength in Christ and His exceeding great and precious promises. We are writing these words for any who might now be going through the heartache of seeing friends turning into enemies. Paul asked the churches in the province of Galatia if he had become their enemy because he told them the truth (Gal. 4:16). Hope as an anchor of the soul looks to the treasures laid up in heaven.

HATE, FALSE DOCTRINE, PRIDE, AND ENVY

The hate family--such things as anger, wrath, malice, clamor, tumult, envy, etc.,--destroy peace and harmony. They are listed with such things as murder, drunkenness, and fornication as things which will keep one out of heaven. These bitter attitudes can enter our hearts and lead us to crucify Christ afresh and put Him to an open shame. We must look for things that make for peace and the beauty of holiness, and bring ourselves into subjection to Christ lest we be rejected on that day. (Read Gal. 5:19-21 and Col. 3:5-15.)

There is an old saying about how useless it is to cry about spilled milk. After the root of bitterness springs up and bears fruit the harm is done. Lessons on things that make for peace need to be studied diligently while things are peaceful. In the heat of battle few, if any, listen to even the best sermons on love, kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, and patience. After such heartbreaking experiences have come and gone we may be better listeners to lessons on these things. It is always good to study the example and teaching of Christ on good behavior and self control under fire because the future will bring need for this teaching. Let us profit by past experiences and present study.

In Acts 20 Paul spoke of grievous wolves that would come. He was seeking to help them through problems that would arise rather than problems of the past. Naming participants, in some occasion of strife, to condemn or to defend may benefit few, if any, of those who hear. People who come in from a distance may find it next to impossible to understand the guilt in each of those present. We teach for the present and the future, and not so much for the past. Of course, it is always in order to plead for mercy, forgiveness, and repentance as needed. Each listener should apply such good teaching to himself.

Our theme is on things that bring peace and on things that bring discord. We are blessed by many divine comments on the hate family and on other things that sow discord. We also have much instruction on the positive things of wholesome influence. The Lord knew that problems would arise and that men would become bitter so He did much to prepare us for such occasions.

One such helpful passage is Acts 20:29-31: "For I know this, that after my departing shall

grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

Paul cried as he thought about the perverse things that would be said and done among the brethren he had loved and taught. He evidently reminded them of the love and grace of God as he commended them to God and to His word. He could offer nothing better. He may have shed tears from the pain that he suffered from being stoned, beaten, and imprisoned, but he mentioned his weeping over problems that came to the churches.

Consider his warning sent to the beloved church at Philippi. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things) (Phil. 3:17-19).

Paul knew that men at Ephesus would arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. He tried to help by giving constant warning over a period of years, but he wept at the thought of the certainty of the tragedy. Angry men will speak perverse things, and perverseness is explosive. Your angry words, my angry words, and their angry words shouted at one another bring results similar to the results

of such angry clamor and tumult at other places.

We look ahead and ward off danger in the future, if at all possible. In trying to convert the world to Christ we preach the gospel to every creature. We do not convert cities or nations. We convert individuals and not all of them. This little effort of mine will not be in vain in we can help a few individuals to act like strong Christians when they face strife and turmoil in the future.

CHRIST IS OUR KING

The kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy is under the authority of the Prince of Peace. He left us an example that we should follow His steps. We pray to the God of peace, and we preach the gospel of peace. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This is a typical salutation early in an epistle of Paul to the various churches. This good and pleasant unity among brethren is from God. Clamor is not.

The message of the angels to the shepherds when our Lord was born was: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). That plan is the exact opposite to the plan used by Diotrephes as described in 3 John 9-11: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

Who have been guilty in the thousands of occasions of trouble and divisions among the Lord's people? All those who have prated against worthy brethren with malicious words and all who have spoken perverse things to draw away disciples after them. There may be other sins involved, but these are enough to break the unity. One who could have calmed troubled waters but promoted strife instead has sinned grievously.

Church problems are not neuter in gender. They are either masculine or feminine in gender. People, not things, cause the disturbances among the saints. One thing or another may be a topic of argument, but the strife and disturbance are among people. Such people have allowed themselves to be enrolled as ministers of Satan. Their king at the moment is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:13-15). These people become rebels against Christ whom they set out to follow. Let us all be careful to avoid being employed by the enemy.

Christ came and taught peace and good will among men. He taught that we should love our enemies and do them good. The command to love our neighbor is second only to the command to love God. The love for the neighbor is active good will. It overcomes evil with good. Brethren may make mistakes, but "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20,21). "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). It is easy to see that love makes for peace. Even if the cost is great, we can well afford to make the

sacrifice.

The Master gave a new commandment, the practice of which is a mark to identify men as His disciples. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another" (John 13:34,35). Do you wear the badge? Do not many prove to the world that they are not followers of Christ by their ugly conduct and attitude which are so contrary to the brotherly kindness, love, and patience which He taught by His example and message? Did you act as our Lord taught you to act when brethren were biting and devouring one another? (See Gal. 5:15.) When churches are not completely destroyed by occasions of strife and bitter conflict they are weakened so that they may never be as strong again. Remember the love Christ has for His church. Let us all carefully avoid being a spot or wrinkle or blemish on the body of Christ (Eph. 5:23-27).

Having special respect and love for Christ our King will do much to protect the church from disturbing conduct within the family. Such regard for Christ will cause us to think more of things that will please Him and less of our pride, position, and power. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). The prophet here gave a principle that is of God and it fits into the teaching of Christ in this age.

ROMANS 14

Romans 14 is dedicated to the theme of peace and active good will toward our brethren in Christ. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." (See Romans 14:1-19.) There is no joy in unrighteousness and disturbance. "Hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying... and such like" will keep us out of heaven, and they will destroy the joy and happiness of this life for all that are touched by them. (See Gal. 5:19-21.) Murder, drunkenness, and fornication are also in this list.

Romans 14 has some lessons that we certainly do need if the church in any given community would be a glorious church and a happy family. "Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats: for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand." (These three verses are from the New King James translation.)

In this passage the apostle was not trying to change the diet of either group. "Meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse" (1 Cor. 8:8). It was not eating or refraining from eating meat that was important, but it was of very great importance that

there be active good will between these good brethren. Harsh judgment, ridicule, and constant harassment, even to the point of despising do disturb the peace and happiness in the body of Christ. Such agitation seems to have been in the church at Rome and Corinth nineteen hundred years ago, and it is present in many churches today. Why is there so much ado over things of such little significance?

Some did observe certain days, and some did not observe these days among the saints at Rome. Each group sought to please God in their actions. From the words of the Spirit-guided apostle we can see that the Lord could gladly accept those with proper attitude and conduct from both groups. To Him they were all of one body. It was unfortunate that there was friction among them over matters of no concern to God. There are enough very important things to watch and be concerned with that we do not need to make a mountain out of a molehill. The items of difference change from generation to generation, but each generation needs Romans 14 and other parallel passages.

The devout apostle to the Gentiles could make great sacrifices to avoid friction on these points because he did not "sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience." He did not want to cause "the weak brother, for whom Christ died, to perish." (See 1 Cor. 8:1-13; Rom. 14:13-23.) How many weak brethren, do you suppose, have perished because of the pride and arrogance of some who seemed to think that they knew everything? These weak brethren who perished might have become good soldiers in the army of the Lord if they had found proper teaching and encouragement at the proper time.

Instead of saying, "I have no need of you," we should count those who seem to be feeble

to be necessary. "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body." (Please refresh your mind by reading 1 Cor. 12:12-27.) In the animal kingdom the strong ox was once the wobbly calf.

We often hear of peer pressure in comments on problems of young people. At times there is amazing pressure among all ages to conform to the popular pattern in everything. Many women who are at least nominal members of the church will follow the styles around them, even if that means they must be immodest. In the vulgar crowd some men will join in with their filthy jokes.

How do you stand on the coat and tie question versus neat casual clothing? Churches have harmed themselves in demanding conformity to some style. On which side of the coat and tie question did you say you stand? Can you think of some passage of scripture that states your belief? According to which style did Paul, Peter, James, and Jude dress? Ladies, what is your stand on the use of lipstick? That was an issue when I was a boy preacher. Let us earnestly contend for the faith rather than for some custom, style, or fad. Is there room in some matters for individuality? Is there room for human judgment on untaught matters?

Early American preachers, whom we often call pioneer preachers, had some good slogans that were in harmony with the Bible. They often said that in matters of faith there should be unity, in opinions there should be liberty, and in all things there should be love. This sort of attitude would solve many big problems. In fact, this would prevent the conflict.

The demand for conformity has many aspects

that are unfortunate. Those at Rome who ate only vegetables likely thought this proper. Not eating meat would be a matter of conscience to some. They were weak, as Paul admits, and they did not understand our liberty in Christ (1 Tim. 4:4). It is not ugly to teach and persuade, but it is wrong to destroy a brother over meat.

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean...It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak...And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (See Rom. 14:13-23.)

When a majority demands conformity in some matter they may be putting very great pressure on some to do that which will violate their consciences. When one does that which he thinks is wrong in the sight of God he is showing the spirit of rebellion toward his Creator even if the deed in itself is not condemned in scripture. In this he becomes an example of a weak brother's perishing by conforming to the demands of the group.

Some questions relate to definite Bible teaching where there is a right and wrong answer, but the individual is the one who acts wisely or unwisely. In some things, sincere individuals make the right or wrong decision, and each will face judgment for himself. As our country approached World War II, a very large portion of the gospel preachers opposed

combat duty in the military units. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and some others favored urging each young man to fight for his country in one unit or another. Some were evidently wrong on this issue. Since the war years men from both groups have worked together as brethren. I am glad that the church did not explode with hate and division in the decade of the war over this serious question.

Some who have read and carefully studied First Corinthians 11:1-16 believe that women should have the hair as a covering and that they should also have a second covering for the head at worship time. These people are generally harmless. They do not carry guns or other concealed weapons. In fact, as a whole, they are sincere to the point that they will face the stare and ridicule of the conformists. Why should these people be harassed and treated as fools? "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10,12). Would it not be better to face judgment as one who followed the suggestions of 1 Cor. 11:1-16, even if they are not binding today, than to face judgment as one who ridiculed, set at nought, and harassed a conscientious servant of the Lord in trying to pressure him to violate his conscience? Will it actually hurt you or the cause of Christ if a man leaves his hat off during worship, as suggested in 1 Cor. 11, and his wife wears a head covering? Thousands are pressured unreasonably to conform. Some do, in weakness, violate their own consciences.

It is possible to find a preacher here and there that is convinced that he and others should talk privately to any woman who does

not wear a head covering in worship, and if she still refuses, the church should withdraw from her. What is your concept of this matter? Is it a matter of man's trying to handle the Lord's work as judge, or could it be an acceptable act of conviction on his part to save an erring Christian? What did the Lord say he should do?

Listen further. It is possible to find a preacher here and there that is convinced that he and others should talk privately to any woman who does wear the covering at the time of worship, and if she still persists in wearing it, the church should withdraw from her. The Bible certainly does not condemn those who as devout Christians do what they are told to do in this regard. (See 1 Cor. 4:17.)

Every preacher should carefully avoid trying to act as head over all things in some local church. Paul mentioned gentleness, patience, skill in teaching, and meekness (2 Tim. 2:23-25). Would these not help more than pressure tactics in matters that are individual in application? It is individuals, and not congregations, that wear head coverings. Each will give account for himself to God. I lean more toward persuasion than to pressure in matters like this. There are situations when leading is more effective than shoving. Men of strong conviction can demonstrate kindness and gentleness in very effective and pleasant ways. Conceit and conviction are not synonyms. One who considers himself infallible is dangerous.

It seems that in this decade every issue becomes a "hot potato." Is it right to offer the Lord's Supper on Sunday evening to those who had legitimate reasons for missing the morning worship? Some think they should partake

in such situations, and others think they should not. What shall we do? Shall we divide, insult one another, or let some strong willed man decide for all? Is it possible to allow him to partake who thinks he must, and allow him who thinks he should not refrain? Christ will handle the judging in the last day. There ought to be some matters in which individuals act without harm to the church. If one, even after years of preaching, decides a matter for himself he is not then given authority to force conformity with his latest impression.

May we admonish people by song to obey the gospel after a sermon has been preached? Should the Lord's Supper precede or follow the sermon? Is it a sin to name a group or a person that is spreading a false doctrine in the area? Would it be a sin to preach a sermon on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 in a house the church owns if a bereaved family and the dead body of their loved one are present? These and dozens of other things have been discussed bitterly among followers of the Prince of Peace! Some people have erred in these matters, and it could have been you and I. Let us walk circumspectly.

We all may have heard the old suggestion that we should think twice before we speak. We should think at least twice before pressing some issue to the disrupting of the peace and unity of God's people. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:19,20). This inspired suggestion makes for peace when used by brethren.

BUY THE TRUTH AND SELL IT NOT

The man who has put on the whole armor, that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, has his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15). The knowledge and proper use of the truth could prevent many problems. The gospel is not filled with instructions on how to win a battle of bitter envying and strife that brings confusion and every evil deed. (See James 3:13-18.) Such battles are not won. Every one loses. The Bible does give instruction on avoiding railing and reviling while replacing these things with love. Christ, the Prince of Peace, is our example and teacher through the gospel of reconciliation.

Peace does not grow on a tree that we might easily pick it off as we might pick an apple from the tree in season. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it" (1 Peter 3:8-11). This is some important instruction that we need. This tells us what we are to do and what we are not to do if we would be a blessing, love life, and see good days.

Love, courtesy, controlling the tongue, and goodness come together. They are necessary as we seek peace and ensue it, for it comes only to those who seek it according to the gospel plan. We are to turn away from evil and

do good if we would obtain the "righteousness, and peace, and joy" which come together. More is included in the inspired message than faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. When we obey these first principles we are to walk in newness of life, adding more faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. We are to observe all things He commanded us. This is what we do to be saved. We seek peace rather than victory over an antagonist. If we would love life and see good days we need to understand that these are by-products of humble service to God.

So many churches have been and are being torn by various false views of New Testament teaching about marriage. Obviously, the things needed are faith in Christ, knowledge of what He said, and willingness to obey the law as He gave it. "Buy the truth and sell it not." One great danger is that we may be influenced in a negative and unfortunate way by some situation in our own lives or in the lives of our loved ones. It is very easy to convince ourselves of some doctrine which we want to believe.

"Seek and ye shall find" are well known words from the great Teacher. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). We are to seek first the kingdom and its welfare. The Christ spoke of turning the other cheek, going the second mile, loving your enemy, etc. When we are reviled we are not to revile again or take vengeance. We are to overcome evil with good. We all know these things, but there is much disobedience in them.

The Lord's plan to make us peacemakers calls

for a lot of effort and self control on our part. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). Things that are not easy may be possible. How many churches have divided in bitterness because those involved did not try as hard as they could by scriptural means to avoid the tragedy? ("If it be possible," He said!) Wisdom, mercy, humility, patience, sound speech that cannot be condemned, and love may be called in to join forces in seeking and pursuing peace. ("As much as lieth within you," He said!) All these things working together might almost accomplish the impossible!

Thousands of our Lord's friends slept in Jerusalem and its suburbs the night His enemies came after Him in the garden. If Paul Revere or some one else, had alarmed the town a large army could have been assembled by morning. Not one went out with such an alarm. He could have called twelve legions of angels to His aid, but they were not called. He went through the trials alone and opened not His mouth as they made their false charges and manifested their blind hate. He prayed for them while He was on the cross. The people mocked from the ground around Him, but the earth did not open and swallow them.

Christ suffered for us and left us an example that we might follow (1 Peter 2:18-25). Was His example in vain for us because we never have gotten the message? It is the story of His being "lifted up from the earth" that has been the great drawing power to win the hearts of men. He came into the world for this hour. (Please see John 12:27-33.) When we preach the facts of the gospel we tell of his death, burial, and resurrection. A crucified Savior was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness

to the Greeks, but the message of the cross is the power of God to those who are saved from among both Jews and Greeks. (See 1 Cor. 1:17-25.) The sermons that are summarized in the book of Acts all tell of His death, burial, and of His being raised. Christ poured coals of fire on the heads of the wicked world and overcame very much evil.

The disciples at Jerusalem were taught "daily in the temple, and in every house." Could this teaching have had something to do with the behavior of the saints when Stephen was stoned? Think of the number of believers in the city at that time. "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). "And in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied..." (Acts 6:1). "And the word of God increased and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Thousands of men could have formed a powerful mob if they had followed animal instinct when their beloved brother was stoned. As far as I know, not one stone was thrown by the brethren. Explain this, if you can. The theme of non-violence must have been stressed with a powerful emphasis.

When the twelve were sent out on the limited commission Jesus said: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16). He did not say they were to be cowards. Doves could not harm wolves. Sheep are not vicious fighters. If brethren today were more like sheep and doves there would not be all the bitter conflicts in so many churches. The trouble makers may have been baptized, but they have not learned one of the greatest lessons the Prince of Peace ever taught.

BROAD ASPECTS OF PEACE

"Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). "That at that time ye were without Christ...but, now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us...to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." (See Eph. 2:11-17.)

Let us remember that when we are thinking of things that make for peace among brethren it is also proper to think of peace with God. Being reconciled to God is most important, but to obtain and maintain this happy relationship with God, He requires that we show active good will toward the brethren. Eternal life is the gift of God while the wages of sin is death. Men of faith are, of course, eager for the prize of the high calling. It is no marvel that we are taught to give diligence to make our calling and election sure even to the point of working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. (Read 2 Peter 1:10; Phil. 2:12.)

All this reconciliation and harmony with God and men has as a by-product peace within one's own mind. This is a great blessing to all who have it. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6,7). This wonderful peace was the secret of the calmness

and courage which the devout martyrs maintained in the face of death. They could join Paul in "having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). They could say with Paul that they were ready to be offered (2 Tim. 4:8). This living hope gave them something which was beyond the understanding of the pagans who were described as "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). This peace is well worth the cost of maintaining it.

Jews and Gentiles were separated by a great wall of prejudice. In the first place, God's law given through Moses had encouraged the Jews to be a separate people. This was for their protection spiritually. They were not to intermarry with their idolatrous neighbors. By the time Christ came into the world there was a conflict between the races which He wanted to remove. Christ removed the middle wall to make brethren of Jews and Gentiles in one body. He also sought to bring bond and free, Barbarians and Greeks, zealots, Herodians, and Pharisees together as children of one Father. We are all one in Christ. Race barriers, social class distinctions, and any caste system were to fall before the onslaught of the gospel of peace.

The Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. (See Luke 19:10.) This was a matter of reconciling us to God. Sin had separated us from Him (Isa. 59:1,2). Christ and His Spirit-guided ambassadors set out to reconcile the world unto God. They had the word of reconciliation, and theirs was the ministry of reconciliation. (See 2 Cor. 5:17-21.) When we make peace with God we are added to the church, made members of the body of Christ, lively stones in the temple of God, and citizens of the kingdom. We need to remember that we become brethren

when we become children of God. This is no little thing. The Father intended that there be a close tie between fellow heirs.

BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS

A heretic or factious man is a most dangerous enemy of the saints, and he is to be marked, avoided, and rejected after the first and second admonition. (Please read Rom. 16:17,18 and Titus 3:9-11.) Whatever such a person may claim to be, he is not a servant of Christ. He may use his good words and fair speeches to deceive. He is "subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." There are many such grievous wolves abroad in the land. At least, there were many in the days of the apostle John (1 John 4:1). There is also evidence of their work in this decade. It is very important that, in spite of these wolves, we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We must also avoid becoming one of the wolves.

He that soweth discord among brethren is listed as one of seven things which are said to be an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 6:16-19). It is rather amazing that we do such a poor job of recognizing and rejecting men like Diotrephes (3 John 9,10). He had a substantial following or he could not have done what he did. It seems that almost any one who tries can get a following to the dividing of the church in any community. Paul warned of elders who would draw away disciples after them. Over the centuries there must have been thousands of angry preachers who have led off their special friends as a faction. Are not those who follow them partakers in their evil deeds? Let us resolve to follow after things that make for "righteousness, peace, and joy" rather than

following some talented leader of a sinful faction. Christ loves the church, and He does not want it put to shame anywhere.

The devil has his devices and we should not be ignorant of them (2 Cor. 2:11). He has his ministers who like to appear to be ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:12-15). Many of his servants have many good traits and appear to men to be Christians. False doctrine may be mixed with truth to make it more attractive. Worldliness, pride, and love of preeminence may be found in brilliant people who are skilled leaders.

Satan's servants can use the same devices over and over in disturbing and destroying the good will among brethren. Division came among the disciples in the last half of the last century over church support of recreation and of central collecting and spending agencies. In the last half of this century division has come over exactly the same type things, and the results are just as serious and just as permanent. The arguments, name calling, ignorance, and bitterness in the two centuries are identical.

We do not read history, so we repeat it. Is there much doubt that such things will come again among brethren who claim to do Bible things in Bible ways? We forget, and we desire to become like the denominations about us. When that time comes there will be some few who will recognize the dreadful effort when it begins again under popular leadership.

In 1931 the Gospel Advocate Company published a book called "The Voice of the Pioneers on Instrumental Music and Societies." This book was written by John T. Lewis in answer to a challenge issued by M. D. Clubb of the Christian

Church. Clubb was editor of a paper called the Tennessee Christian, and he was president of the Tennessee State Missionary Society. He wrote that he and his brethren were standing where the apostles and the pioneer preachers in this country stood on the instrument and the societies. He challenged any one to show that he was wrong. Bro. Lewis took up the challenge and did a remarkable job.

Bro. Lewis must have had access to a wonderful library because he quoted from articles written fifty to eighty years before his day. He quoted from very many preachers who wrote in very many religious publications. He was able to show clearly, and beyond any room for doubt, that a large percent of the able preachers of that day opposed these innovations. His book makes it easy to see that the arguments and attitudes were the same as those made in the 1950s and the 1960s when division came again over similar centralized denominational machinery that sought to collect money from local churches. I have several copies of Bro. Lewis' book which has recently been reprinted by W. C. Hinton. The price is \$5.95, and I believe it will be a blessing to all devout members of the church. You may also order it from your favorite book store. We need to read such books lest history continue to repeat itself.

FACING SOME PROBLEMS

The friendship of the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). We cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). Righteousness works for peace, but worldly people seek for teachers who will tickle their ears (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Faithful servants of the Lord need to work hard and fast

to keep sin out of the camp because those who love the truth and those who do not will ultimately meet in separate places. They will have different teachers. Worldliness is an ever present danger to the unity of the family of God. When lust and pride enter the love of God leaves. (See 1 John 2:15-17.) One who shuns not to proclaim the whole counsel is working for the unity and integrity of Christians. Worldliness and doctrinal error stay out only where they are vigorously opposed. Teaching of the past years will not suffice. An excellent teaching program makes for peace. We must be steadfast and unmovable against all evil while we abound unto righteousness.

It is a marvel how soon a church can be removed from the gospel of Christ to a perverted gospel (Gal. 1:6). In such cases some of those who had been good friends become enemies (Gal. 4:15,16). Those who go beyond and those who take from the word cut themselves off from God, and we are not to receive them (2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18,19). The errors in regard to worship, the work of the church, its organization, or its message can replace peace with discord. Tolerance for social drinking, immodesty, vulgarity, and the unholy dances are associated with what we usually call doctrinal errors. A lack of respect for and careful study of the Bible are the basis of all common sin.

To maintain unity we must have a common standard of authority. Actually we do have a perfect law for any generation in any part of the world, but we must all accept it if we would walk together. If human judgment guides some and others walk by faith there will be at least two groups. Manuals, disciplines, catechisms, the Koran, Book of Mormon, etc., cause and maintain confusion of tongues. If people claim to

speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent but do not, they will be separated from those who speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11). It is not what we claim but what we actually do in religious matters that counts. We should walk by faith that comes by hearing the word of God.

The Baha'i faith seeks to unite all religions into one universally acceptable unit. There is no such unit. Their system has no Savior and no Bible, so it has no foundation or message above the vain reasonings or products of human imagination. Humanism or classic modernism can offer that much. A man's mind can be so open that there is nothing there but a draft. Christ gives man something to believe and something for which he can hope. Why settle for less? Many Christians may fail to realize how much they are blessed, and the power of the gospel.

Some who claim that the Bible is inadequate as a guide try to prove it by mentioning some little situation in the home or business life that is not mentioned in the Bible. Such people can say that we do many things for which we have no Bible. Such assertions have brought much harm to the church which the Lord purchased with His own blood.

The word does include the necessary expedients to carry out His generic commandments. The command to sing authorizes us to have the songs. The command to meet gives us the authority to provide a place. Things like these bother only when some are looking for an excuse to go beyond that which is written.

The Christ did not come to guide industry in manufacturing cars, computers, chemicals, or any other legitimate business endeavor. Par-

ents, business men, factory workers, and farmers are given wonderful principles of righteousness to restrain them from sinful things and to promote honesty, fairness, and other good things. The Bible will furnish us all things that pertain to life and godliness, but it does not instruct man in the details of his work by which he earns his living. It does not teach math or grammar. It is a book on proper behavior. Men who have heard much gospel preaching are without excuse for not knowing how to handle the word of truth aright. Some seem to be ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth.

There have been many occasions in which arguments over labor unions, politics, family estates, and other things that should not involve the church have brought bitter strife within the body of Christ. In such matters, putting the kingdom first and pressing toward the mark for the prize will make for peace. Special efforts should be made to keep personal, family, and social problems away from the church. The more spiritually minded the people are the less likely the cause of truth will suffer from civic or political problems.

SOME SPECIAL PROBLEMS

Any generation may have some very explosive national problem that has the potential to destroy many very precious things such as governments, the church, civic groups, the family, friendships, and lives. The Roman Empire had such a problem nineteen hundred years ago. A very large percentage of the population was slaves. This was a sensitive matter for individuals, business, and government. It was a

bit like a fuse to a powerful bomb that could be easily lighted and cause thousands of deaths. It was a civil rights issue such as the world has seldom, if ever, seen of this magnitude. If the apostles and all other Christians had fought diligently for freeing all slaves there would have been a blood bath over the land, and mighty forces would have been put into action against the church. Christ died for the rich and the poor, and either can have access to His throne, but He taught men to suffer, if necessary, in this short life in order to go to heaven.

"Let as many servants as are-under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed: and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort" (1 Tim. 6:1,2). The teaching of Christ's messengers could make slave and master become dearly beloved brothers. (Please read Philemon carefully with this thought in mind. Also read Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1; Titus 2:9,10; 1 Peter 2:18-25; 1 Cor. 7:20-24.)

The Bible instruction to slaves and masters is a very amazing call to turn the other cheek and go the second mile in the interest of peace. The Lord sought to regulate and improve the unwise slave-master situation rather than destroy everything by haste and impatience. Some have thought that the one page book of Philemon may have done more to eradicate slavery from the world, by giving a wonderful example of the brotherhood of slave and master, than any other book, no matter how large. Christ did not suggest lighting the fuse that would have led

to murder, war, destruction of property, and blasphemy against Christ and the gospel. Ordinary human creed writers might have done otherwise. Roman slaves were not of one race but of many races. Many were conquered people from wars made in increasing the size of the empire. This teaching was a case of spiritual matters taking precedence over civil rights.

In the sixth chapter of First Timothy from which we noted the matter of good will and faithful service of slaves toward masters, even Christian masters, the writer also deals with the very ugly attitude of a certain type of trouble maker. After asking Timothy to teach and exhort slaves he said: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

There is a very great difference between a humble man contending for the faith and the man with a morbid delight in controversy who engages in perverse disputings that bring about strife and railing to no purpose. In this study we are not going into a detailed study of the first part of 1 Tim. 6, but you might benefit much by a careful study of it. The Lord's faithful servants will fight a good fight, but they are not given to carrying on a protracted battle through pride or selfish motive. Wholesome words are in order any time, but perverse disputings are never appropriate. Blessed are the peacemakers, but the Lord hates those who sow dis-

cord. The same fountain cannot bring forth sweet water and bitter.

POWER IN APPARENT WEAKNESS

Physics teachers tell their pupils that to every action in the physical world there is an equal and contrary reaction. Christ taught something akin to this in the spiritual world. "Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). This verse will mean more if you will read the context. Our Lord said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). His attitude in His death and in the events of that day led even the centurion who was in charge of His death to say: "Truly this was the Son of God." There was wonderful power demonstrated and exerted when He appeared to be so weak and helpless.

Early Christians were killed in the arenas before the mobs which watched as men watch games today. Such persecution did not destroy the church. It kept it pure by making it less appealing to hypocrites, and the calmness and peace of mind of those who died spoke eloquently of their faith. You and I know that Christ said: "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). The amazing growth of the church in the face of such brutal persecution has led some to say that the blood of martyrs was the seed of the kingdom. It was true that the gospel (the seed) was preached by their excellent daily behavior and their remarkable attitude in facing death. True Christians are like Christ. They are His disciples.

It is something of a paradox to say that people are drawn to Christ by the story of His rejection and crucifixion, and by the blood of the martyrs. All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (See John 15:17-16:4; 2 Tim. 3:12.) Courage, loyalty, purity, unselfishness, and other products of faith and love are powerful in any setting.

When immorality, materialism, and pride take the place of spirituality in the lives of many the church is weakened, and the devout are repulsed. Division and apostasy come when the love of the world enters the fold. People prepare themselves for the right hand or the left hand at the judgment by their reaction to truth and purity. Some are drawn to evil, and some are drawn to righteousness. Good people may help prevent the problem of division by bold and effective preaching and teaching before it is too late. (Consider 2 Tim. 4:1-5.)

The lump must not become leavened with malice and wickedness (1 Cor. 5). There must be firm and bold action in keeping such leaven out of the church. Some say that withdrawing from the disorderly will cause trouble. It will if the disorder has entered the hearts of many members. The Lord knows best, and there is no doubt that He suggests that we put away the wicked person. There can be no peace if the wicked person has several of his kind on whom he can lean for support.

There are some uninformed members who seem to feel that bold preaching of the whole counsel will cause trouble. They would encourage preachers, elders, and other teachers to hold back on popular sins and popular false doctrines. Paul, who was faithful to proclaim the whole counsel, wrote the church at Ephesus and asked

that they pray for him that "I may open my mouth boldly, as I ought to speak." (See Eph. 6:10-20.) When a false doctrine or a sinful practice is at the door it is high time for every faithful person to stand up and be counted if he would be "pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:20,26,27). Boldly proclaiming the teaching of Christ with kindness and gentleness makes for peace.

There is a great difference between boldness and rudeness. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves..." (2 Tim. 2:24,25). A gentle man may be bold as he contends for the faith with skill, patience, and meekness. The surgeon uses sharp instruments which cut deeply, but he is trying to help. He does not use the hatchet to remove the appendix. The bold teacher who preaches the truth in love is trying to help. Rudeness, railing, and even lying grow out of ugly hate. These things come out of a desire to destroy. Let every servant of the Lord easily discern between boldness and bitterness.

THE HATE FAMILY

There are more than twenty five English words in our New Testament used to identify the hate family, which are the tools of those who bring "confusion and every evil work." (See James 3:13-18; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8.) The Greek language had as many words for these darts of the wicked one. Would it likely be true of all languages? These words do not refer to the things skilled teachers need who edify others, but they describe the undesirable behavior of trouble makers. "Let

your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). "Know how" is very important in speaking on things eternal. (See 1 Peter 3:15; Gal. 6:1.)

Much of the trouble in churches today is over foolish questions, we may suppose. This was certainly true in the day when Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus. Agitators do not realize, or do not admit, that their questions are foolish. Let us all seek wisdom to avoid such things. Fables, endless genealogies, vain jangling, profane and old wives' fables, questions and strifes about words, perverse disputings, vain babblings, and foolish and unlearned questions were mentioned to Timothy and Titus in the three epistles written to preachers in the early church. Was that generation so guilty of these disturbances while our generation is innocent? How would an inspired man speak of many questions that are disturbing brethren today? Which questions are "foolish and unlearned?" Those who harm the church by pressing such questions need to awake to danger and repent before the day of judgment. Did the guilty people who read the letters to Timothy and Titus in the first century recognize themselves for what they were?

ELDERS

The Spirit directed the apostles to establish the idea of elders in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Phil. 1:1). These elders were called bishops, but there were no archbishops in charge of many churches. There were no sponsoring churches with their elders overseeing a national or international project and handling

the money from many churches. When elders do their work at home they are doing a great work and are worthy of special respect and honor. (Read 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:17.) They do harm and not good when they try to handle the affairs and make decisions for many churches. If some church has trouble elders from some church many miles away could hardly be expected to have understanding of the situation and be better able to make official decisions than the local elders. It will be a step in the direction of peace if elders do not try to oversee churches in other areas.

Any gospel preacher, elder, or other Christian should be available to help as individuals when needed, but no man from his study or living room can get information from one side or another and then make a wise and official pronouncement for a church that is a hundred or more miles away. Paul went to Corinth because that church was sick, and he encouraged others, who were familiar with Corinth, to go and teach. The elders at Philippi were not asked to withdraw from Corinth nor to meddle in its affairs, and neither were the elders at Thessalonica or Ephesus asked to be in charge of matters that were internal problems at Corinth. We still believe in local autonomy, do we not? A few churches have been hurt seriously by meddlers from afar.

The task of selecting elders has been associated with disturbing problems in recent years. Time, teaching, and patience are needed. There may be one or more who do not want elders, and they can hinder the selection. A few may have set standards for elders that would require angels, not men, for the work. A few, on the other hand, may be willing to select some who do not measure up to the rules the Lord set.

Elders, of course, are human and the Lord knows that, but they are to be faithful men who are walking in the light. Brethren everywhere need more knowledge of and interest in the office of an elder that the church might be spared the heartaches that are often associated with the selection of men for this good work. Some ambitious men may cause trouble through their strong desire to be elders when the congregation lacks confidence in their judgment, character, doctrine, or their ability to work with others.

What is to be done when there is agitation to get rid of the elders? Would the right thing depend on who is making the complaints and why they want to take away the overseers? Surely Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence, must have wanted the elders to resign at Colosse (3 John 9,10). Whenever grievous wolves arose from within the eldership at Ephesus they would naturally want the other elders to resign (Acts 20:29-31). When a church faces a major problem it is a sad time for the leadership to be weakened or destroyed. Our accusation against elders should be received only after proper evidence (1 Tim. 5:17-19). Only a very unworthy man would desire to remain an elder after his conduct has destroyed the confidence of the faithful brethren. All worthy elders should be willing, even under trying circumstances, to serve when strong and capable leadership is especially needed because of a crisis. Raising a white flag when there needs to be a battle for truth is not appropriate.

Voting to settle questions and controversies leads to division rather than peace. Efforts to influence the voting becomes a political campaign and is effected most by the zeal and personalities of the politicians. In such cases spirituality is pushed to the back burner and

strife takes its place. General statements of this nature may not be true in every place, but I know of no exception myself. From the first and third chapters of First Corinthians we learn of carnality and parties among them. A vote would have almost certainly led to an open split. Persuasion, teaching, patience, and time work toward peace. Trying to get people to line up and vote agitates the problem.

In a voting situation in a heated contest, a worldly teenager's vote could cancel the vote of an experienced and well taught man of faith and character. The good Bible student would likely not vote because of the obvious unholy results that would follow the voting. The successful party (faction) after the vote might have a measure of satisfaction and joy of accomplishment. Others would, as a general rule, be defeated, upset, and unhappy. The name of Christ would suffer from the political battle.

What about using a petition as a means of settling controversy? This is a form of voting and a way to line up one party against another. It matters little what the fine print at the top of the petition says if it is one group signing some resolution against another. I have been involved in church work in a few states for more than half a century, and if there has been any good come from a petition in a controversy I am not aware of it. It is easy to learn of petitions that were forces toward division. Those who sign a petition are, of course, influenced by whoever it is that brings it by to be signed. It is a matter of getting "our friends" lined up against "them." It is not a way to settle anything. It is a result of an unsettled condition, and it is a way to bring things to a head rather than to solve the problem.

In commenting on voting and petitions we have no scripture to quote because there is no command, example, or necessary inference suggesting either in the Bible. Does that indicate that both are unscriptural? The Bible does not suggest majority rule. Often the majority are in the broad way (Matt. 7:13,14). Think of times of digression as in the case of institutionalism in the 1950s and in the years that followed. The majority went digressive, using power tactics.

If teaching truth is not done effectively and in time, no plan from human wisdom will save the day for the faithful. If the disturbing question is, "Who is your favorite preacher?" politics of the cheapest kind get involved in voting or petitions. After the vote the preacher who was running for the "office" will have his name scarred rather than have the good name which is rather to be desired than great riches. No good man should allow his name to be thus involved.

SELECTING A PREACHER

When a church selects elders there is usually much time taken for study and discussion. Some of the things said and done in such efforts are often very unwise and unfortunate, but there is at least some time used to try to accomplish that which is best. Good elders carefully selected and fully backed in their work are a great blessing to the church.

There is often little thought, concern, or effort put into the task of selecting a preacher. Almost all churches today have a desire to have at least one man to work full time

as an evangelist. Does his attitude, knowledge, disposition, and character have anything to do with his ability to do the work? These things, of course, are of the very greatest importance. It is amazing that they are often almost completely ignored in selecting the new worker.

The oratorical contest is the method often used in selecting the preacher. A few who are looking for a place to preach contact the church that is searching, and they are allowed to come by and preach one or two sermons. Of those who enter the contest one may stand out as the winner. He has a pleasant appearance in the pulpit. He has a smile and a good flow of words which are not negative. His pleasant voice, hearty handshake, and neat attire have their place in winning the hearty approbation of the group, and they express themselves freely to the elders, so he is invited to work with them. They may know nothing about his past record.

There may be some important things that were not done. He may have almost destroyed the last church where he worked. His jealousy and selfishness may have hurt the cause there, but none from the new place may have called to learn of his record. He may not have many well prepared lessons like the two he delivered as his trial sermons, so he may not be one who is vigilant, studious, and dedicated to preaching the whole counsel. His pleasant part in the social life may be more important to him than his special efforts for the spiritual growth of the brethren. It may be his understanding that he is to teach a class or two and preach twice, and that private efforts to teach, comfort the bereaved and sick, and to restore erring brethren are altogether the work of others. He is the evangelist! It may take

too much of his time to get his fishing, hunting, and golfing done.

It was over fifty years ago when a silver tongued orator won the contest in the "trial" sermons in my home community, so he was invited to preach for the church. Within one year he had one large segment against the elders and the rest of the church. He left the church weak, sick, and smaller than it was when he came. Were there precious souls lost in his causing the church to become weaker, sicker, and smaller? This remarkable orator was able to move to a church less than forty miles away and, within a year, leave it divided and sick. He could and did then move no more than one hundred miles away and repeat the same divisive story. He then made a wonderful move so far as the church was concerned. He went back to the Methodist church to which he belonged except for the few years in which he brought his jealous spirit among us. I do not know what the Methodists did with him. Men like this should be marked, avoided, and rejected (Rom. 16:17,18; Titus 3:9-11).

Why was there no inquiry by these churches about this man's disposition and influence? I sincerely believe that an able orator like the one mentioned above could move from church to church among us today. Some that are too much like this are working in this negative way in this decade. Brethren, please check on the preacher whom you are considering for work among you. Check on his disposition, his regard for his debts, and his character. Was there some room for serious questioning of his behavior with some woman in the church which he is leaving? You do know that preachers and preachers' wives are being caught in immorality, do you not? Men who are true Christians do not

object to being investigated, and others should be.

There are many good men who can work for years at a place and leave a good record when they move to another good work. Some of these may not be known for their oratorical ability. (See 2 Cor. 10:10.) Describe, if you can, the manner of speech of each of the apostles. The qualities mentioned in the scriptures related to soundness, seasoned speech, words fitly spoken, truth, that which is profitable, and ability to convict (Titus 2:7,8; Col. 4:6; Prov. 25:11; Eph. 4:14; Acts 20:20; Titus 1:9). There are many similar things said about the speech of the Lord's servants, but nothing about that wonderful mellow voice. The voice, in part, depends upon the shape of the holes (sinuses) in one's head and on the condition of the vocal chords. There are more important things. A man who would deliberately disturb the harmony of a church because he dreads to move or because his pride is hurt should not be invited to work with any church any where.

If an audience gathers two or three times each week for hundreds of weeks to hear the same man they may be correct in thinking that it would be good to change preachers. It is very difficult for one man to feed a church a balanced spiritual diet. Some spend very much time telling church members how to become Christians and very little on how to cope with problems that are threatening. The whole counsel is needed. I have tried to deal with things that are profitable to the people to whom I have preached, but I admit that some churches have had a spurt of growth soon after I left. At least, I did not leave them so sick that they could not grow. There are very few men, indeed, who can spend decades at the same place

as THE preacher without there being several evidences of weakness in the churches where they have worked. The church finally adopts the weaknesses of the preacher who has stayed so long. Brother, your usefulness is about over at a place where a large portion of the best people want you to move. Show us that you can take the hint and move graciously. It is poor judgment for a preacher to use his last days or the last few weeks of his stay to pour out hate on those who have listened courteously to his advice so many times.

A preacher, of course, counsels and advises others each time he speaks. It is a shame if he cannot listen to advice and counsel from those who have supported him financially and morally since they first invited him to come work with them. Preachers can learn as well as teach. We need to exhort one another daily. Preacher, can you take it? You can dish it out to others.

There are too many devout men who are willing to work diligently at the task of building up the church to put up with selfish and jealous preachers who are looking for a job that flatters their egos. It would make for peace in churches in America if such preachers would move to Utopia! Utopia? Where is that? It would help if trouble makers would get jobs in the factory. Let us encourage and give moral support to every faithful and sound preacher we meet, but let us discourage the hiring of any preacher who is bent on causing trouble.

Preachers who are worthy men of the highest degree often face trying situations which they cannot control. Such men do not deserve blame for unholy conditions which are not of their making. There are so many churches which are in trouble, and preachers are often discouraged

beyond measure. Many young men who had planned to give their lives to the work of preaching the gospel face such cantankerous people at one place and then another until they give up their dreams of full time work as preachers. Any such experience is a sad story.

We have mentioned selfish preachers. It is also proper to mention selfish churches that refuse to support a preacher financially enough to keep him from constantly being in a strain to meet his living expenses. Industry pays part of the social security tax, health insurance, and other fringe benefits. If an employee needs his car in his work the company pays the car expense. Some say that the preacher earns as much as he would in industry, but they are not taking all things into consideration. Worthy brethren deserve moral support and reasonable financial support.

WEIGHTY QUESTIONS WITHOUT DIVISION

Can there be a significant topic about which sincere and devout brethren differ and yet do not come to bitter division? The answer is an emphatic yes! When men on both sides are sincere and devout there is much more hope of a happy solution to the problem. Truth has an advantage over error when time for study and patience are available.

A classic example of a serious difference that involved many over the nation especially centered in the editors of the Gospel Advocate and the Firm Foundation papers. The question was concerning sectarian baptism. People who had been baptized by Baptist preachers, and

who for a while had attended Baptist churches, heard gospel preachers and decided to be just Christians. Should these people be baptized for the remission of sins? There were those (from the Advocate) who said they did not need to be. There were others (from the Foundation) who said yes. The discussions were very frank for a long time, but there was no serious split. Truth, I believe, prevailed after prolonged study. Strong men who desired to please God were involved in the discussion.

Before the beginning of World War II a majority of the gospel preachers were opposed to Christians' entering into combat duty in the military service. The evidence I had would indicate as much. As we have said before, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and some of his associates urged the young men to fight for their country. A small percentage of the young men faced the hardships and social pressure and stood by their convictions as conscientious objectors. They gave public service at parks, mental hospitals, etc., without the financial support for comfortable living. Other young men went into military units for non-combat service. Many went into the army, navy, air force, and marines for whatever assignments officials would suggest. There were heated discussions, but churches did not divide.

In the years after the war some of these men from all groups have worked as faithful members of the one body whatever their understanding had been or is now on this question as to the relationship of the Christian to his government. The question is important. There is a right answer and there is a wrong answer, but the application is to the individual rather than to the collectivity. The Lord is the great Judge. I am glad that the church did not divide

over this sensitive problem.

In this decade there has been discussion on the subject of the forgiveness of sins (1 John 1). It seems difficult for either group to state the view of the other in satisfactory terms. Must one come to realize each sin he commits, confess it to God, and repent of it specifically, or are there many sins forgiven which saints commit but never realize?

This topic of forgiveness for children of God who err has been discussed forcefully, but it seems evident to me that there will not be some major and disgraceful division over this matter. There is a sincere search for truth. All agree that Christ is the Judge and that men should give diligence to make his calling and election sure. There is room for fear and trembling as each does the best he can to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. None can do better than this. If one touches on this subject, even briefly, in a sermon one or two may challenge him after the sermon. My experience has been that the challenges have been with courtesy and not with bitterness. It would be wonderful if all topics of controversy could be discussed with brotherly love and patience. We could then help one another in the effort to go on toward perfection rather than have hatred in our hearts that would explode into the destructive power of envy and strife.

THE LORD'S PLAN

The plan of the Lord is the ideal plan. His wisdom suggested that worthy men be ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1; 1 Tim. 3). These men are to be honored, esteemed, and obeyed (1 Thess. 5:12,13; 1 Tim.

5:17; Heb. 13:7,17). Yes, this is minority rule, not majority rule. It is the rule of the best and strongest spiritual men. The babes in Christ, the more worldly, and those with special desire to follow the way that is more popular with the world are not to be decision makers for the church.

Preaching, reproofing, rebuking, and exhorting with long suffering is God's plan for seeing that the weak grow spiritually, and that the worldly be converted or marked so as to be avoided. Sinners must not dominate the work. A worldly majority will reject sound men and sound doctrine while they heap to themselves teachers after their own lust (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

As sad as it is to contemplate there are occasions and situations when factions do arise and true servants of God cannot go along with the servants of Satan. The thing Christians should do is preach the gospel of peace in time to prevent the unholy situation. Some churches came through the society and social gospel problems of the last century, the premillennial problem of the thirties in this century, the ever present problem of worldliness and factionalism for a century or more, but the number of such churches is very, very small. Some which stand in times of serious testing when some digression is blowing by later divide over some trivial matter that should never have been a problem for the church.

Peace is precious, but so are loyalty and purity before Christ. Christ never sought for some peace arrangement with the Pharisees and Sadducees. He was despised and rejected by them. He does not recommend peace at the price of compromise of principles of truth and righteousness. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteous-

ness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and, ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

We desire harmony with God and with His faithful children. This would be the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We must not give up righteousness to maintain the good will and favor of the unrighteous. May God help us to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves!
