

Articles and Sermons :: Make Peace With Each Other by K.P. Yohannan

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The Apostle Paul wrote a very personal, affectionate letter from prison to the Christians in Philippi. He longed so much to see them and was praying for them all the time. They were so dear to his heart that he called them "my joy and crown" (Philippians 4:1).

In New Testament times, Christianity was a close-knit community of small fellowships. The Christians were often rejected from their families and severely persecuted by religious and secular societies, and thousands of them died as martyrs. Believers depended on each other for fellowship, support and encouragement in following Jesus. Their love and commitment for one another was very precious to them.

In those days, for someone to receive Christ bordered on social suicide because people lived in joint family units. They depended on each other for their livelihood, love, support, security and future. Imagine that out of 20 family members only one came to know the Lord. What pressure, pain, mockery and rejection he or she had to endure. For such a lonely, suffering believer, the church was his place of joy, love, comfort, acceptance and family.

The Struggle for Unity

With this backdrop in mind, the apostle Paul wrote about a major concern he had on his heart: "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord" (Phil. 4:2).

The two women were good believers and had shared Paul's struggle for the Gospel, but something happened between them that affected their love for each other and disrupted the unity of the church.

Paul didn't say what their problem was, but from his exhortation about letting your mind dwell on good things (Philippians 4:8), we can conclude that it may have been misunderstandings, listening to gossip or imagining negative things about each other.

Paul asked the leader of the church to help these sisters to make peace with each other.

The world is full of darkness. We cannot change or control what happens around us. We also cannot stop outsiders from misinterpreting the Good News of Jesus and creating problems and confusion for the work of God.

The crisis we face is not the darkness out there; it's the one inside the church, the things that divide believers, and destroy their love for one another and the unity among God's people.

To name just a few: secret jealousy of a brother's or sister's position or gift; disappointment because someone received recognition and we didn't; blaming others for our own failures; resentment of a correction or well-meaning counsel; or listening to and believing negative reports.

Paul urges the two women in Philippi and us to live in harmony with each other. This will not happen unless we start taking responsibility for our own hearts.

What We Can and Must Do to Preserve Peace and Unity

Unless we walk in humility like Jesus, our Lord, we will never be able to rejoice when others are blessed or recognized. We will also never take responsibility for our own failures, and we will not benefit from any correction or counsel, even if it were given by the Apostle Paul or Jesus Himself.

Unless we love others with Christ's sacrificial love, we will never stop listening to bad reports and passing on negative information and gossip about others.

How do we take responsibility for our own hearts?

We must learn from Jesus to deliberately choose humility instead of trying to fight for recognition, power and position. Let God be the One to lift us up in His own time.

We must honestly examine our motives and why we say what we say and act the way we act. Many times we cleverly cover up our secret agendas, resentments and offences with a smile and nice words. If we don't deal with such un-Christianlike motives, we will not be able to walk in the light with our brothers and sisters, and the love we once had for them will become cold, or worse, turn into hatred.

We must watch diligently what we permit to enter our lives through our eyes and ears and what we entertain in our minds. It will affect our hearts and our walk with God and easily poison our relationships with our brothers and sisters. We must tell those who come to us with the "latest news" about others: "I don't want to hear it."

For the protection of our own hearts, we must practice what Paul told the Christians in Philippi: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." (Philippians 4:8) (nasb).

Practicing this will automatically filter out the things that destroy the love and unity among God's people, which is the greatest testimony we have in this world.

My dear friend, for the sake of those who don't know the love of our God, let us take responsibility for our own hearts and love each other as Jesus loves us.