

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

VIII. The Living Way And The Believer

“Let us consider one another unto a penetrating interaction of love and good works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, even as the practice of some, but encouraging one another, and so much more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24,25).

The new and living way which came to us through the sacrifice and energizing power of Christ, has brought vitality to the people of God, both in their relationship to Him as well as to one another. There was nothing in the old covenant that did more than bring the people of God together in a commonality of national identity as well as religious and moral obligations. Respecting the possessions of one's neighbor did not extend to any personal interactions.

With the coming of Christ and the vitality of His presence within, came also the caring consciousness of *agape* love. It is not so much the emotional or sentimental expression of *phile* love, used of family and friends, but the deeper caring of the spirit that reaches out to others in the love of Christ. Often that love of Christ expresses itself in consideration of others apart from the emotional involvement of the fleshly psyche. The net result is a new kind of relationship to others even as we have a new kind of relationship to God.

Considering one another... The Greek word for “consider” is *katanoeo*. It means to think about something carefully—to go below the surface. In the social circles of the world, relationships are commonly casual or superficial. Without the grace of Christ it is very difficult to deal with people on any other basis. If one attends a social event, it is easier (and usually more discreet) to engage in idle chatter and not get too involved in serious interactions.

In the fellowship of believers, however, it is important for us to interact with one another at a much deeper level. Of course it is also possible for Christians to function at a superficial level when they function in the flesh. This can happen when Christians come together for events that are social or merely human efforts at organization and promotion. Often business meetings in the Church are no different than business meetings in the local service club.

But when Christians come together in the Spirit for purposes of worship and fellowship in the Word and in service, the mood is much different. At such a point, the interaction between believers is at a much deeper level as governed by the Holy Spirit. For instance, the author has been conducting Bible Study groups for 40 years. In all of this time there has rarely been anything of dissension or disunity. There may be differences of opinion, but the Spirit seems to draw the hearts together in a commonality of interest and purpose. But, on the other hand, the author has been in many gatherings that were social or organizational where there has been a good deal of superficiality and dissension. So when we relate to one another at the human level we are subject to all the personality problems and inadequacies that go with the natural mind. But when we relate to one another at the level of the Spirit, the caring consciousness of Christ prevails as well as the understanding that comes to us through Him at the spirit level.

Unto a penetrating interaction of love and good works... The common translation—"to provoke one another"—is not at all satisfactory. The meaning of the original Greek word, *oxuno* has to do with sharpness. It can be used either of the piercing of a sharp instrument or of a sharp and pungent odor. It was therefore used in the Greek classics in the sense of provoking or irritating or angering. This meaning is hardly appropriate here. Thus we look to the idea of a pungent or penetrating aroma. Our relationship to one another is not at the superficial level of social grace, but the deeper level of concern for one another and of the touching of the wellsprings of the spirit as effected by the Holy Spirit within us. In this sense we interact with one another in a penetrating way. In a sense this does bring about a certain "stirring" of the sensitivities, but certainly not in the negative way of "provoking" or "irritating," in the common usage of the Greek word. It is possible to relate to people at this level, only because the Holy Spirit in us overcomes the usual barriers of personality conflicts. There are conflicts in the flesh, of course, inasmuch as humans are involved, but the unity of the Spirit prevails in spite of human problems. Christians may sometimes seem overly involved in the problems of one another, but that is really because of the deep concern for the welfare of others.

The "good works" do not refer to benevolences and charities, but to the outward expression of the inner work of the Spirit—that which is fostered by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said—"*This is the work of God, that you believe on Him who sent me.*" The Holy Spirit works within us "to will and to do of His good pleasure." Our very sensitivities to Christ as well as to one another reflect this inner working of Christ. In our interacting with one another in a penetrating way, we do stir up these sensitivities.

Not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together... This is not a mandate to attend formal church services. It is rather a suggestion that believers ought to get together with one another in some way on a regular basis to fellowship with one another in the things of Christ. Paul makes it quite clear in Romans 14 that the times and methods are personal. "*Some people regard one day above another and some regard every day alike; let each be persuaded in his own mind.*" There are many reasons why people may not be able to attend regular "church services" as such. The programming that the Church has become accustomed to today is nowhere required in the Scripture. It is a human and traditional formalization of worship as preferred by some. However, having lifted legal restrictions, it must be said that it is most important for believers to support one another and share together their common relationship in the family of Christ. Those who do this are better fortified for handling the events of this world that seem more threatening as the culmination of this draws near.

Encouraging one another... The Greek word here is *parakaleo*. It is the word from which we get our description of the Holy Spirit as the "Paraclete" or "Comforter." It is popularly translated as "one called alongside to help." Thus the word takes on more of a supportive meaning. The common translation—"exhort" is far too harsh. The word "encourage" is from the French word for "heart"—*coeur*. So the English word means to "enhearten." Paul urges the believers to comfort one another. "*Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort*

wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II Corinthians 1:4). The word *parakalew* is used throughout this verse.

In the expression of encouragement, there may sometimes be something of helpful suggestions, but it is not a word that suggests that Christians ought to go about "shaping people up." This has, in fact, been a bane of the Church from the days of the apostles. Christians are too quick to judge one another and to take responsibility for giving advice where there is no capacity to do so. It is a mild form of "quackery" and belongs in the category of patent medicine or "snake oil." Christians ought to leave each other alone. The unfortunate and reprehensible justification for giving advice is the idea that "the Lord wants me to say this to you"—an illusion that would be difficult to verify. On the other hand, Christians can do a great deal to encourage one another and support one another, especially in praying for one another. It is all right to be concerned about another's welfare so long as that concern results in prayers and encouragement's.

So our Great High Priest provides within us the worship center and the capacity to relate to Him and to one another at levels not possible in the natural human personality. The ultimate result of His ministry yields a threefold encouragement—*"Let us come near"; "Let us hold fast"; "Let us consider one another."*

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