

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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For Better or For Worse

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Introduction

When you read the title some of you probably thought of wedding vows about for better or worse, however, that is not what I mean. This phrase is taken from this scripture:

But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. (1 Corinthians 11:17 NASB)

Paul is speaking about the gathering of believers as an assembly; what we would call “church”. Assembling together was not for the better, was not beneficial, but was for the worse, detrimental. In the next verses Paul begins to explain what he means, why their gathering is for the worse. First, he said, there are divisions. Then he goes on to describe problems with their eating together and the Lord's supper. After that he discusses their abuse of the gifts of the Spirit and their lack of understanding and application of the principles of the Body. Their attitudes and actions in these areas produced an environment that was “for the worse”.

It seems to me that we still have these same problems today, maybe in a slightly different form but the same issues. Are our meetings “for the better or for the worse”?

Why do we meet?

I don't think that any of us want to get together for the worse. Our desire is always for the better. How do we make sure that our gathering lives up to the Lord's and our desire? First, we need to understand that we are one Body not many. While meetings may occur in various places and at various times, we are still one Body (1 Cor. 12:12). The Body is not divided.

Individual members may look and function differently but that doesn't mean that each is not a part of the Body.

If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am

not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? (1 Corinthians 12:15-17 NASB)

God has purposely given diversity. "If they were all one member, where would the body be?" (1 Corinthians 12:19 NASB). As a result of this diversity the Lord has established a mutual dependency among the individual members of His Body.

And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." (1 Corinthians 12:21 NASB)

There is a mutual need because there are different functions of the individual members. Each function is necessary for the proper working of the Body. For this to occur there must be proper placement in the Body for the proper functioning of the Body.

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. (1 Corinthians 12:18 NASB)

Placement

Our placement in the Body is completely in the hands of the Lord and is according to His desires and intentions. We do not decide where we are placed! How carnal have we become if our choice about who we gather together with is based on the programs, or the kid's activities, or the type of worship team, or any of a hundred different soulish desires on our part? We must seek the Lord's placement according to His desire. This is done through the Holy Spirit.

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. (2 Corinthians 5:16 NASB)

Just as we no longer know Christ according to the flesh but now know Him by the Spirit, we also no longer know other people according to the natural or the flesh but according to the Spirit. That means that we don't choose the people we associate with according to our likes and dislikes but, instead according to the Lord's likes and dislikes.

It is the Lord that chooses our relationships and establishes them in Him. We are born into the household of God (*Eph. 2:19*) and because of that we do not get to choose our brothers and sisters. We must learn to live with them and learn to love them as our siblings regardless of our personal likes and dislikes.

Built Together

It is the Lord's plan to intensify our relationships. The Family of God is being built together into a dwelling, a temple of God in the Spirit.

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (*Ephesians 2:20-22 NASB*)

Being built together cannot happen without us being fitted together, which is a process that requires time and shaping. Whenever we break relationships or drag our feet in establishing proper

relationship with others we stop the “being fitted together” process.

Why do we break relationships by getting “out of joint” with others? Because we don't like them or are at odds with minor doctrinal differences are the usual reasons. If these “relationship stressors” are allowed to continue it will result in one of us saying to the other “I have no need of you”, which is contrary to Paul's words in Corinthians. The Lord will not allow this in His Body.

Remember the Church is not an organization but an organism. It is not a place but a people. It is not membership that is important but it is relationship. Your place is not a position but a function. It is not where you meet that is important but how you are being built together.

The Lord is building His Church. He structures all of the relationships and determines how each living stone is placed. Do we yield or resist?

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