

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)

Volume 13, Issue 12

December 2015

Corporate Body

Introduction

Recently I was contemplating some things about Church and our relationships with one another when this verse came to my attention.

1 Timothy 3:15 NASB but in case I am delayed, *I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church* of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

As I pondered on this Scripture, I realized that all that we know about how to conduct ourselves as it relates to “Church” is what we have learned from the Institutional Church or the world system. Typically we rephrase this in our minds to mean “how we ought to act in Church” meaning the building and the things of the sanctuary that we esteem as “sacred”. For example, my brother who was a denominational pastor always referred to the pulpit as “the sacred desk” and it irritated him when I didn't speak of the pulpit with the same reverence.

In this Present Truth Teaching Letter I would like for us to re-think some of our notions and traditions about “Church” and how we conduct ourselves.

People Not Place

Just as the Greek word, *ekklesia*, which we have translated as “Church”, means people and not a building, so does the explanation of “church” in the 1 Tim. 3:15 scripture listed above. Church is explained as the “household of God”. Again, this is a people and not a place.

As long as we think of church as a building we will never properly apply this scripture. It has nothing to do with how we act in the building. The “church building” is no different than any other building and how we conduct ourselves in it is no different than how we conduct ourselves in any other building. There is nothing sacred about the building nor the things in the building. God no longer has any “sacred” places. He doesn't dwell in man made buildings.

Acts 7:48 NASB "However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says:

So, where does God dwell? He dwells in His people who are being built up as a spiritual house a holy temple for the Lord.

1 Peter 2:5 NASB you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:21-22 NASB in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

In building terms we are being built together as living stones to become a completed edifice as a dwelling of the God in the Spirit. In organic terms we are the household of God, the Church, the Body of Christ. It is easier to understand how we are to conduct ourselves in organic terms than in building terms.

Relational Conduct

How we conduct ourselves in the household of God clearly becomes a relationship issue—how we relate and interact with one another. Proper relationships become the supply to the Body and causes the Body to grow.

Colossians 2:19 NASB and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

Ephesians 4:16 NASB from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

God has clearly defined His expectations on how we relate to Him and to each other. In Hebrews 10:22-25 the writer makes three “let us” statements concerning what we are to do. The first “let us” in verse 22 shows our conduct in our relationship with God. The second in verse 23 speaks to our actions concerning our confession or testimony. However, it is the third “let us” that concerns us as it is frequently misinterpreted or misapplied.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NASB and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, (25) not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

There are three things in these verses that we are to do to properly conduct ourselves in the household of God.

1. Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds or works,

“Consider” means to observe carefully, to take careful note of one another's condition. It is the same word used in Hebrews 3:1 about “consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession”. When we truly “consider one another” there is a result, an outcome that affects who we are and what we do. By doing this we learn how to stir up or stimulate love and good works in each other. This is part of our *spiritual duty*, an obligation that we have to the Lord and to the Body of Christ.

2. Let us not forsake our assembling together,

To assemble together is more than meeting together. The meaning of the phrase is “parts brought together, collected to be put together, assembled”. There is a spiritual goal in

mind each time that we come together as the people of God. The Assembly, the *Ekklesia*, is the “ones called out” by the Holy Spirit and it is also the “ones called together” by the Holy Spirit.

There is already an executed design, which was developed by the designer, for anything that is being assembled. There is a collection of parts that were also designed to be fitted together in a pre-determined place and a pre-determined order. The same is true of the Body of Christ. God has designed His Temple according to His own desires. He has pre-determined (chosen) the parts (living stones) and has a pre-determined placement and function for each one.

We have been told many times that the Sunday morning meeting is the assembling together and that if we don't attend then we are “forsaking the assembling together”. This is simply not true. First, I have attended many Sunday mornings and that gathering is far short of the meaning of “assembly”. Second, no “assembling” is going on—it is just a bag full of parts that are being jiggled together. I am not at all sure that any institutional church has the capability to “assemble” the way that the Scriptures intend. At least, they can't and continue to function according to their denominational by-laws.

There are aspects of our coming to maturity that cannot be accomplished without us being “assembled together”. The things spoken above about “considering” can only be applied in a corporate gathering—we are “joined and knit together”. That is a two-step process—joined is coming together in relationship and knit is being bound, secured together, by the Holy Spirit. It is a *time intensive process* that requires commitment, endurance, and change on our part.

3. Let us encourage one another.

The Greek word that is translated “encourage” has a much broader meaning than our English translation. The meaning of the word includes exhort, comfort, console, encourage, strengthen, instruct and teach. Therefore, the meaning of the word can only be applied in a corporate context and is included when we “assemble” and “consider” as discussed earlier.

The Corporate Body is an Organic Body and is defined in terms of our relationships with the Lord and with each other. When we assemble it is for spiritual purpose which includes “considering” and “encouraging” one another. We need to conduct ourselves in such a manner that these things can occur among the household of God.

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