

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Personal Relationships – Personal Responsibility

(Jerry Fite)

Paul exhorts the Thessalonian brethren to “*always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:15). Seeking the well-being of brethren is to be manifested unto “all”, leaving no one out, and to “one another”, making it personal.

In personal relationships, there will be times when two Christians will be at odds with one another. Paul exhorts the Colossian brethren to be “*forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye*” (Colossians 3:13). Forbearance and forgiveness smooth the rugged road to renewed harmony between brethren. Bearing long overlooks matters short of sin, and when sin occurs, one is ready to forgive as the Lord has forgiven him or her.

God has not forgiven us unconditionally (Acts 2:38, 17:30), so forgiving others as the Lord forgave us is also conditional. If a brother “repents”, we are to “forgive” (Luke 17:3). While we should always be ready to forgive, we must not give any impression to the sinner that he or

she is at one with the Lord, when no repentance has been manifested.

Sometimes the sin is not just missing the mark established by God’s law; it is a personal wrong against a brother or sister. Jesus tells us how we should handle such matters: the one wronged is to go to the one who has sinned against him or her, and privately point out the wrong. Jesus says, “*and if thy brother sin against thee, go show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother*” (Matthew 18:15).

The one who has wronged his brother or sister also has a personal responsibility in initiating the healed relationship. Jesus instructs the one, who knows that another has aught against him or her, to seek reconciliation with that brother or sister. Such action even takes precedence over offering worship unto God. Jesus says, “*If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come offer thy gift*” (Matthew 5:23-24).

Jesus sees a positive outcome from personal wrong. Do we also see a gaining of our brother, when we go to them to point out their sin? Do we, like the Lord, see reconciliation taking place as we seek to make things right with a brother or sister we have wronged? Sadly we often do not share the Lord’s optimism, and shrink back in following God’s path to healed personal relationships.

Sometimes the one who has done personal harm is not aware how they have hurt you. They can only come to you for reconciliation if they first “remember” that they have done you a personal wrong (Matthew 5:23). So, be forbearing! But the wrong is to be corrected for their soul’s sake before God, and your own well-being, in putting the wrong behind both of you through repentance and forgiveness. So, first privately, go to the one who has wronged you and point out their sin.

Do not let fear of a potential painful confrontation, or how the person will treat you in the future overcome your faith in carrying out the plan the Lord has laid out for you to follow. Trust and Obey!