

## **Eradicating the Spirit of Selfishness**

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. -- 1 John 3:14*

Selfishness is one of the most predominating influences at work in human beings. When a higher priority is placed upon pleasing self instead of seeking to obey the will of God and manifesting the spirit of love, evidence of selfishness is certain to exist.

The original demonstration of selfishness is that of the great Adversary in Isaiah 14:12-14: How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High

Lucifer was a highly exalted, glorious being who was not satisfied with his station. Because he wanted to have a dominion for himself, he sought the Almighty as his rival. Lucifer's rebellious act enticed the first pair in Eden to sin, and for more than 6000 years we have been witnesses to the disastrous fruitage of sorrow, pain, and death which have plagued the groaning creation.

Selfishness does not merely have a corrosive effect upon character, but the possession of such a spirit can even lead to murder. In John 8:44 Jesus speaks to the Pharisees regarding the Adversary.

*Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

### **Am I My Brother's Keeper?**

Satan's "murdering" of the human race and Adam and Eve's disobeying the heavenly Father is a legacy that has continued from one generation to the next.

*And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?-Genesis 4:8-9*

As footstep followers of the Master, the spirit begotten must live by the principles and precepts outlined in the Word of God. The question Cain posed, "Am I my brother's keeper?" must be answered by a resounding "YES" by all who will prove to be members of the body of Christ.

We can gain an appreciation of how one should be his brother's keeper by studying the practices of the early church. One of the classic illustrations of unselfishness is recorded in Acts 2:44-47.

*And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people.*

We are not advocating that believers attempt to follow this seemingly communistic arrangement. Given our inherited weaknesses of the flesh, such an arrangement is not divinely ordained as an environment in which we are to strive to make our calling and election sure. Nevertheless, we appreciate the joy these brethren experienced after their baptism and receiving of the holy Spirit as they now walked in newness of life.

Just as we are walking in newness of life, we have individual responsibilities regarding all those who are similarly walking in the same path of consecration, particularly to those members of our home ecclesia. Ecclesias have collective responsibilities. Each member must share to enhance the spiritual well being of all those in the fellowship.

### **Assembling Together**

In reality, our entire consecrated life is spent in one of two activities. We are either assembling ourselves with members of the brotherhood or we are away from the ecclesia, in which case we are attempting to apply the principles of truth we have learned in our meetings. Hebrews 10:24-25 concerns one means of eradicating selfishness.

*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

As new creatures in Christ striving to overcome selfish tendencies, it is evident that we should stimulate one another towards righteousness and self-sacrifice. Only by the counterbalancing effect of obedience to God, plus fellowship, study, and the sharing of experiences with our brethren will we be strengthened to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. What a wonderful blessing it is to be in the midst of those who hold our welfare foremost in their hearts. None of the Lord's people is so strong that he can stand alone.

We note that even Jesus during his earthly sojourn-although ultimately he trod the winepress alone-received great comfort by spending quiet moments among those who were closest to him.

The business meeting is one of the most important types of meetings the ecclesia can conduct. It helps promote not only the unity of purpose but also the practice of unselfishness. Often, however, business meetings do not always engender the greatest level of harmony. For an ecclesia to meet the needs of each individual as well as the entire body it is essential that there exist some forum for discussion.

Certainly there must be provision for instruction in such matters of the faith, including doctrines, prophecy, and moral conduct. This instruction might be provided through studies, discourses, or any combination of formats. Since all points of truth can rarely be addressed on a specific topic during the course of one meeting, it may be beneficial to have periodic sessions for discussing and answering questions of interest.

Devotional services are extremely critical. The need for prayer, praise, testimonies and meditational readings is evident when we consider the trials, sorrows, and stresses we endure on

a regular basis. It is the one type of meeting in which we should talk about ourselves and our feelings, and the commonality of shared experiences enables us to speak in personal terms.

### **Consider One Another**

Interestingly, in the sequence of scriptures in Hebrews 10:24, we are admonished to consider one another even before we are admonished to assemble ourselves together. The matter of considering one another implies a careful study of those in our fellowship. We must be students of our brethren as well as students of scripture in order to be a blessing to them. Each of us has various personalities, peculiarities, and imperfections. When interacting with our brethren, our sensitivity and the spirit of a sound mind should guide us.

In I Corinthians 12:12-27, we are given an extremely important treatise on how to view one another. This passage of scripture characterizes an ecclesia full of vibrancy and love. It does, however, reflect that there are different abilities, talents, responsibilities, and functions for the various members of the body. But it is our heavenly Father who arranges those members of the body in such a fashion that each complements the other.

### **Love One Another**

The inculcation of the spirit of love is the only means for eradicating the spirit of selfishness. Jesus says in John 13:34, 35 --

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Love is not merely an abstract concept, it is an action. If we fail to meet with our brethren, to interact with them, to pray with and for them, to sacrifice for them, how, then, are we to demonstrate our love for them? 1 John 3:14-16 says:

*. . . We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death . . . Hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

Our love for the brethren should draw us together as body members. The ecclesia has been designed to help enhance our spirituality and to instruct us in applying Christian principles. We have been recipients of God's unmerited favor. The exercise of our appreciation of God as the giver of every good and perfect gift should prompt our hearts toward manifesting this same quality of giving to others, especially the laying down of our lives for the brethren.

*Condensed from a discourse by Homer Montague*