

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

INDEPENDENT • MISSIONARY • ESTABLISHED 1786

VOLUME 26, NO. 11

AUGUST, 1995

THE BOND OF PEACE

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"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
Ephesians 4:3.

INTRODUCTION: We live in a world of discord and strife, a world of clashing ideologies, a world where the inhabitants are hateful and hating one another. Sin creates friction among men. Man has lost his brother because he has lost God. War is the inevitable result of sin and as long as we have a sinful world we will have a warring world. I am for every effort to maintain peace in the world, peace among nations, but I have little hope that any or all efforts will succeed.

The new Jerusalem is described in Revelation. *"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."* Revelation 21:27. But we are not in that city yet; we are in a world that has that which defileth and worketh abomination and maketh a lie. Moody use to say that a lie could travel around the world while truth was putting its boots on. This is because the world of humanity is more favorable to a lie than to the truth. I am speaking, of course, about moral truth. You do not have to make convincing arguments to get the masses to believe a lie. Hitler's philosophy was based upon this fact. He contended that if you tell a big enough lie and tell it often enough it would be believed. And he told some big

ones. And had it not been for God, his lies would have swept the world into absolute ruin.

Moral truth has to have support of grace, especially religious truth. Jesus implied the giving of grace when He said, Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Religious error makes its own appeal to human nature, while religious truth makes its appeal through grace. *"And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace,"* Acts 18:27.

Our text is an exhortation to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. This is not easy to do, but grace is sufficient. Believers have the same nature and disposition that are found in men of the world. *"By nature we are children of wrath even as others,"* Ephesians 2:3b. And this nature has not been destroyed.

The Lord's people do not find it easy to live with one another. We have the rags of a fallen nature wrapped around us and the fleshly lusts of a fallen nature within us. We will both give offense and partake of offense. *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all,"* James 2:10. We will have to be patient and forbearing with one another; otherwise we will break up into a multitude of groups and sects, hating one another and devouring one another.

Our text's context gives us a

prescription for keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are to have all lowliness of mind and unselfishness, longsuffering and forbearance.

Our big problem is what to do with the resentments and anger that come from insults and mistreatment. To begin with many of our insults are only imaginary. This is because we are allergic to self. We are egocentric, which is plain selfishness.

But we do have insults and bad treatment to face and these things bring anger and resentment. Now all anger is not sinful. *"Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath,"* Ephesians 4:26. There is such a thing as righteous anger, but it is controlled anger. *"And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him,"* Mark 3:1-6. Anger is righteous if it has grief

because of what is happening to others and not a grudge because of what is happening to us. Even righteous anger must not be allowed to take its abode in our hearts.

Anger has a disruptive effect on us. Anger not only makes us hard to get along with; it not only makes its object unpleasant, it hurts ourselves. Anger will actually poison our body. For example, a baby nursing a quarreling mother. Anger has a bad effect on the intestinal tract, it retards digestion. Doctors have put a tube through the nostrils of a man down into his stomach. They tested the contents of his stomach according to the state of his mind. When he was in a good humor, digestion went on normally; when they purposely made him angry, his digestion completely stopped. When they brought him back into good humor, digestion would start again.

Scientists tell us that if a rattlesnake is cornered it will become so angry that it will bite itself. That is what all harboring of hates and resentments against others is, a biting of oneself. We think we are harming others in holding these spites and hates, but the deepest hurt is to ourselves. It hurts us both physically and spiritually.

Anger dims the vision. Hence the saying, "blind with rage." An optometrist once said he could never examine the eyes of an angry man, for such a man simply cannot see straight. In a debate: when a man gets mad, he is whipped. A shrewd debater always tries to make his opponent mad. Dante: "The wrathful travel in a cloud."

In keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace we will have to be unselfish. We will have to surrender our plans, we will have to give in again and again. And right here our mind may play tricks on us. We may think we are interested in the cause of Christ, when in fact we are concerned about having our own way. Here is a good test: If

I want to do a thing a certain way because of my interest in Christ, and I can't have my way, I will work just as hard to make the other way a success. Many a man thinks he is fighting for principle when in fact he is fighting only for personal pique and pride.

In keeping the unity of the Spirit we will have to learn what to do with our anger and resentments.

1. We must not try to suppress them and act as if we did not have them. It is better not to have them, but if you do have them, don't suppress them. This only drives them below into the subconscious mind where they will do much harm.

2. Don't express them. This will mean a blowup of passion and anger that will work havoc. You can get temporary relief this way. We can feel better for the moment by giving the person a piece of our mind, but that is a good way to lose our peace of mind. A woman who had been tense and frustrated came away from the phone feeling much better after having told someone what she thought of her.

3. They must not be nursed. Here is a realm in which there is no shortage of nurses. Somebody mistreats you, he ignores you or lies on you, and you have a feeling of resentment. But don't nurse that feeling. If you nurse and feed it by meditating upon it, it will grow and fatten and take all of your time. There are people who give more time and attention to their grievances than to anything else. You can nurse a grievance until it will become like an afflicted child in the home, it will take all your time.

Oh, the people who have quit their church and have harmed themselves for time and eternity by nursing their grievances.

4. We must practice forgiveness for Christ's sake. This will require much prayer. Bring those resentments and grievances to Christ, and let Him know how you want to forgive those who wrong you. A Chinese student

once looked into the face of his teacher and said, "Teach me how to love the Japanese." An Armenian said the same thing, "How can I forgive the Turks?"

The teacher told the boy how one Armenian girl had been unable to forgive a Turk. She and her brother had been attacked by Turks in a lane. She escaped by climbing over a wall, but her brother was brutally killed before her eyes. She was a nurse and later on while nursing in a hospital recognized one of her patients as the very soldier who had killed her brother. Her first feeling was: revenge! And, oh how sweet! This soldier was very ill, just hovering between life and death. The slightest neglect and he would die. And no one would know. His life was absolutely in her hands. Here was her chance. But she decided to forgive, for Christ's sake. She fought for his life and won, nursing him back to health. When he was convalescing she told him who she was. The Turkish soldier looked at her in astonishment, and said, "Why didn't you let me die when you had me in your power?" "I couldn't," answered the girl, "I just couldn't for I am a Christian, and my own Master forgave his enemies who crucified him." "I must do the same for His sake." "Oh," said the hardened Turk, "If that is what it means to be a Christian, I want to be one."

THE WORST FAMINE

BY: C.D.COLE

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord," Amos 8:11.

INTRODUCTION: A famine is the extreme scarcity of anything, such as a coal famine, or water famine, or food famine.

Famines have been rather common throughout the history of the world. The first time we read of a famine in the Bible is in Genesis 12:10, *"And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there: for the famine was grievous in the land." "And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar,"* Genesis 26:1. In Genesis 41 we have Joseph predicting a famine for Egypt and advising the King to prepare for it by laying up during the seven prosperous years that preceded it. In Genesis 42 that same famine struck Jacob and his family in Canaan and he had to send to Egypt and to Joseph for food. The book of Ruth begins with the story of a famine in Canaan that drove Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons to take refuge in the land of Moab. In II Samuel 21 there were three years famine in the days of David, and when David inquired of the Lord he was told that it was for Saul and his bloody house because they had slain the Gibeonites. *"And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria,"* I Kings 18:2, because of the three years and six months drought for which the prophet prayed. *"And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver,"* II Kings 6:25. *"And the king*

said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son," II Kings 6:28.

And when we come to the New Testament, our Lord prophesies of famines and pestilence and earthquakes. *"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places,"* Matthew 24:7. In the book of Revelation we have the three horses of the Apocalypse representing war, famine and death.

A study of the Bible reveals that famines haven't come accidentally, but providentially. *"Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant,"* Psalms 105:16-17.

There were many signs that a famine was about to overtake the nations of Europe during World War I. Hoover called frantically for help for millions of people in the little democracies of Europe.

Our text speaks of a different famine which the Lord says he will bring upon the land. Which is the worst, a famine that starves the body or a famine where the soul starves? Which is worth the most to a man, a basket of meat and bread for his body; or the bread of life for his soul? One kind of bread is of temporal value; the other of eternal value. Lazarus, lying at the rich man's gate starving, reveals the importance of bread for the body: the once rich man, lying in hell, reveals the importance of bread for the soul. It ought never to be easier to take a collection for the orphans to feed their body, than for the heathen to feed their soul

with the bread of life.

A Famine of Hearing The Words of The Lord

1. Observe here that absence of God's word is called a famine. Is that the way you regard it? Would it hurt you much for the word of God to be taken from you? Would it be hard on you to be where there was no one to explain sin to you? How much do you appreciate hearing the words of God? How are you showing your appreciation?

2. Notice that this famine is sent by God. It is not accidental that there are places where you can't hear the word of God. There is a reason.

3. From the angle of human responsibility, man is to blame for there being a famine of the word anywhere on this earth. If the people of God had been faithful to their trust there would be no spiritual famine anywhere today.

4. What constitutes a famine of hearing the word of God? When do you have a famine of the word?

a. When a church is destroyed and its members scattered by persecution and the preacher silenced by imprisonment or death.

b. When preaching is displaced by programs and pageants and cantatas. Short sermons are in demand today. There is not much place for preaching in the work of the average church. In many a church the preacher has to fight for a place on the program.

c. When error prevails under the guise of truth--Rationalism, Arminianism, Romanism.

d. When the preacher is not apt to teach, you have a famine. Preaching the word doesn't consist in mere quoting of scripture. There must be interpretation of the scripture. People have the Bible in their homes, but they need the teachers to explain. You

can have a famine in a community even when there is a Bible in every home. God gave pastors to the church to feed the flock.