



The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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The Local Church (VII)

“Our Responsibility To Be Active In Edifying”

By Vernon Teagarden

On the night of our Lord’s betrayal, He foretold that Peter would deny Him three times. Peter was told that he would survive the trial with a strengthened faith and then the Lord instructed Peter, “and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Lk. 22:32). Peter was to receive strength that he might impart strength to his brethren. Likewise, all Christians have the responsibility, not only of bringing others to Christ, but also helping them to achieve their full usefulness in Christ. Someone has said, “We can’t afford to let the sheaves rot in the barn.” This is simply another way of saying what Jesus said in Matthew 28:20, that we need to teach those we baptize to “observe” the things He has commanded. Paul said that his work involved “warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ”(Col. 1:28). The word “perfect” means, “having attained the end or purpose, complete, or fully developed.” Because the members of a local congregation are “members one of another” (Rom. 12:5), they individually

have the obligation and privilege of helping each other become complete or come to full development.

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Individuals must begin their lives as Christians as babes (1 Pet. 2:2). Gradually, however, the Christian is to grow toward spiritual maturity (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:14). Just as individual members of our physical bodies grow, resulting in the body itself growing; in like manner, when individual members of the congregation grow, the church itself grows (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

In any congregation there will be some members who have grown more than others. This uneven development means that the body cannot function as effectively as it could if all of its members were mature. For example, when a person jogs for exercise he finds that, at first his legs can hold out longer than his lungs. Later, the opposite is true. Imagine how far might a person be able to run if his legs and lungs were at their full potential. In like manner, how effective might a congregation be if all its members were at their full potential? This is why it is imperative that all members of a local church grow to become spiritually mature.

THE NEED FOR MUTUAL EDIFICATION

It is not enough for each member himself to grow. He

The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

can, and must, help the body by helping others to grow as well. To “edify” means to build up, strengthen, benefit. Christians must not only edify themselves, but others also (Rom. 1:11, 12; 14:19; 15:2; 2 Cor. 10:8; Eph. 4:29; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24). Christians are to love one another, and love edifies (1 Cor. 8:11; Gal. 5:13). However, in as much as Christians cannot be forced against their will to accept responsibilities of membership in a local church, how may they be influenced to want to

be active? This is accomplished in four ways. Through teaching and admonishing (“admonishing” simply means to put one in mind by encouragement or by reproof); (Col. 1:28; 3:16; Matt. 28:19, 20). Through prayer (Col. 1:9-11); and through setting the right example for others (1 Tim. 4:12). Furthermore, there are three specific opportunities for edification. First, we need to strengthen and build up new converts (Acts 14:22; 15:36, 41; 16:5). Second, we can help the erring or weak members (Gal. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). Incidentally, members of a local church have a responsibility to be actively involved in any disciplinary action taken by the congregation. This would include both “instructive” and “corrective” discipline (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:14, 15). Third, we may help members who have failed to develop as they should (Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Thess. 5:14).

Few aspects of the life of Christians bring more joy and fulfillment than help others to grow. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “My chief want in life is someone who shall make me do what I can.” May we each do all we can to assist our brethren in their development and receive the help they give us in the proper spirit.

(Next, “Our Responsibility To Attend All The Services”)

The “Place of the Press”

Have you ever stopped to consider the origin or the significance of the name of a particular place?

For example, consider the name “Akron.” Akron was founded near a series of locks on the Ohio and Erie Canal. The locks were necessary due to the higher elevation of the area which gave rise to the name “Summit County”, as well as the name “Akron”, which is the rough translation of the English word “summit” into Greek.

Until a few years ago I didn’t realize the origin or significance of its name, and how fitting that name is given that information.

The same is true for many of the names of places we read of in the Bible. We often fail to consider the meaning and significance of the name. It’s not that the name is more important than the events that took place there. It’s just that considering the name more closely we can gain a better appreciation for the spiritual significance of God’s unfolding plan of salvation, and the parallels between the name and the events that took place there.

Consider the name “Gethsemane.” It literally means the “place of the press.” It was a garden outside of Jerusalem, across the brook of Kidron, near the foot of the Mount of Olives, where at one time olives were pressed under a crushing weight for their oil.

As Christians knowing Gethsemane as “the place of the press” underscores the significance of the events that we know transpired there. For we know it as the place Jesus went to pray prior to his betrayal and crucifixion, a place where Jesus was “pressed”, not by the weight of his own sin, but by the

crushing weight of the sins of the world.

Jesus was pressed in the Garden of Gethsemane in that he suffered great sorrow, agony and distress, knowing that his hour had come. He suffered both the emotional and physical pain of bearing our sins in the garden as well as on the cross (Matt. 26:37-44, Mark 14:33, John 12:27).

“And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground”, Luke 22:44. He suffered so greatly that he fell on his face and prayed fervently (Matt. 26:39-44).

And, through his prayer, reverence, and resolve to do his Father’s will he was strengthened. “Who in the days of His flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”, (Heb. 5:7-9).

How fitting and providential that in a place named for a press, Jesus was pressed by the great weight of the sins of the world and yet was not crushed! Rather, he was strengthened, going on to secure the victory over sin for us on the cross. May we ever remember the spiritual significance the Garden of Gethsemane, “the place of the press,” has for the salvation of our souls.

- Jeff Haught