

THE TEACHING *Legacy of* *Derek Prince*

THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

In the natural, if you are to have a symphony two things are certain: You must have a score, and you must have a conductor. In the spiritual realm, if you are to have symphony you must have the same two things. The score is the will of God; the conductor is the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew 18:19 we read: "If two of you agree on earth." The Greek word for agree is precisely the same word that gives us the word symphony. It is not mere intellectual agreement; it is harmony, concord. It is two or more people being united in one spirit. When people come together in one spirit, in harmony, agreeing on the will of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit, then anything they need is accessible. This is a real promise, but you have to meet the conditions.

Sometimes people say to me, "Come, Brother Prince, let's agree. We'll pray for so-and-so." I sometimes feel embarrassed because I think it is a shallow pretense and that it will not produce the results. Agreement is not just saying, "We agree." Agreement is being in harmony in the Spirit with one another, and as we come to this place of real spiritual harmony, we are irresistible. Because of this, the devil will do everything in his power to keep Christians from coming into this place, and he has largely succeeded with multitudes of professing Christians.

I trust that I will not shock you by saying that the church, which is the body of Christ, is not an earthly institution. Generally speaking, Christians have felt obliged or impelled to produce some kind of institutional organization through which they can tie themselves together to achieve unity. Yet the truth of the matter is, this does not produce the kind of

unity God intends for the body of Jesus Christ.

Under the Old Testament, God had a tremendous problem with His people, Israel. He had revealed Himself as One who could not be adequately represented by any kind of portrait, picture or image. The attempt to make an image of God was strictly forbidden. But we find again and again that Israel fell into the error of making an image or an idol and saying, "This represents God."

I believe a corresponding mistake is made by Christians in this dispensation. The body of Jesus Christ cannot be represented institutionally. It cannot be represented as an organization of the kind that we are familiar with in secular life. But time and again, Christians try to make something visible and tangible out of that which is spiritual. They try to produce an organization, a union, a tying together that will replace the proper unity and relationship of the body of Jesus Christ, and invariably there is failure.

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Take, for example, the Salvation Army (and this is no criticism of the Salvation Army). Within the

Salvation Army there is strong organizational unity that is similar to that of an army. And there is a further tying together through uniforms so that you can look at members and see immediately that he or she is in the Salvation Army. Everything man can do to produce unity and organizational structure is there, yet two people may be at loggerheads with each other. So, far from being in real union and harmony, they may actually be in total opposition. Two people may be in the Salvation Army and one may be converted and regenerated and the other may be unregenerated. They aren't even in the same spiritual sphere!

Take for example the Anglican church of Britain, in which I was brought up. You could be a member of the Anglican church and be Communist or Roman Catholic. Within that organization, bound together by organizational structure, there are diametrically different ideas, totally opposed to one another, in absolute disharmony, with no union whatever in the spiritual life. The church structure is an outward substitute for the inward reality.

The great danger that I see is that we often accept the outward as a substitute for the inward, and then neglect the inward. The result is that today there are multitudes of Christians within the body who are in wrong relationship to other people and they are not even aware that anything is wrong.

“...unless your relationship with other people is right, you cannot be an effective member of the body.”

One night in a service, five people came forward for healing. I was led to ask each person individually, “Is there any unforgiveness or resentment in your heart against anybody?” Out of the five, three people said, “Yes, there is.”

I replied, “Well, do you really want me to pray for you? I can go through the motions, but what kind of effect do you think prayer is going to have?” And do

you know what they said? “We'd better go away and put things right and then come back.” Remarkable! But what was really remarkable was that those people were not conscious of the wrong relationship. Why were they deceived? Because they had allowed some external substitute to blind them to the inner reality.

If we would look at the inner condition of the body of Christ today, we would be shocked at what we saw!

JOINTS AND LIGAMENTS

If the outward union has nothing to do with the inward spiritual relationship within the body of Christ, what is it that keeps the body together? What is the true nature and source of our unity? We find the answer to this very important question in two passages from Ephesians and Colossians.

In Ephesians 4:16 Paul speaks about Christ as the Head of the body: “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

In Colossians 2:19 in a similar context, Paul speaks about Christ the Head “from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.”

There are two things that Paul says unite the members of the body: joints and ligaments. Just as joints and ligaments in the physical body keep the members together, so they also unite the members of the spiritual body of Christ. What are the joints and ligaments? I would suggest to you, very practically speaking, that the joints are the relationships between the members of the body and the ligaments are the attitudes that prevail among them.

A person's arm has three bones. Though each one is strong and healthy, their effective functioning depends on a joint, which is called the elbow. Each of these bones could be in itself perfectly healthy, and yet the arm could be very ineffective if the joint did not function properly. This is also true of the body of Christ. Your individual stability is not all that is required to make you effective. Your relationship to others is the joint that fits you into the body, and unless your relationship with other people is right, you cannot be an effective member of the body.

Again in Ephesians and Colossians Paul speaks about the great ligaments that unite the whole body. In Ephesians 4:3 he says to keep “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The words bond and ligament are the same in Greek. And Colossians 3:14 says, “Put on love, which is the bond of perfection”—which keeps the entire body together.

The most essential bond or ligament that can keep the body of Christ together in true unity is love, the

second bond is peace. We are all kept together as a whole by what I choose to call “the attitude of peace and love.” But when this attitude is non-existent, the functioning of the body is totally broken down. Where we stand in wrong relationship to our fellow Christians, the body cannot function, nor can we receive what we need ourselves. Not only do we shut out others from the blessing, but we are shut out ourselves. Yet my experience in various situations and among so many groups has been that more than half the people in any professing church congregation have wrong attitudes and relationships to other people, and quite commonly these wrong relationships are with other members of their congregation.

On one occasion, after preaching in a certain Pentecostal church where God really moved, I went to another Pentecostal church and preached the same messages. But at this second church, nothing happened. I thought, What’s wrong? Do you know what I discovered? It was a church of about four hundred people who regularly attended on Sunday, and yet the church was divided right down the middle. The people on my right hand had not spoken to the people on my left hand for five years. When they approached one another in the street they crossed the road in order to avoid speaking. Consequently, for me to preach to those people was a waste of breath and time, since there was no possibility of the Holy Spirit moving in that church. Ironically, I have found in so many similar circumstances that the people in such a congregation are ready to blame their pastor or hire another evangelist or do anything except the one thing they must do, which is to get right with one another.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

It is a fact of life that potentially, and often experientially, our most dangerous, harmful, poisonous relationships are with the people with whom we are the closest. One particularly common relationship problem is that of young people and their parents. I would venture to say that the majority of young people in the United States are in some measure in opposition to or rebellion against their parents, and, in many cases, the parents have to acknowledge a major share of the blame. The problem, then, is not juvenile delinquents but also adult delinquents.

Nevertheless, I always tell young people: If you have resentment, hatred, and rebellion in your heart

against your parents, remember, it is not your parents who will suffer the most—it is you. The one who resents suffers more than the one who is resented. Furthermore, Scripture says the first commandment with a promise is “Honor your father and mother... that it may be well with you” (Ephesians 6:2–3). You will never have it well if you do not honor your father and mother. It is contrary to divine law.

The other area where this problem is most prevalent is the husband/wife relationship. The proportion of how many husbands resent their wives and how many wives resent their husbands is amazingly large.

Let’s come back to the initial statement: “If two of you agree on earth.” Who are the two most obvious people on earth to agree together? A husband and wife. And how many of them do agree? I wouldn’t like to answer that! Many women are busy in church activities just because they do not agree with their husbands. They run to the church, not because they want to serve the Lord, but because they want an escape from their problems at home.

I remember praying once with a young married woman for deliverance. After she had received a wonderful deliverance she said, “Oh, Brother Prince, now I think I’m going to be a missionary, or at least a Sunday school teacher!”

I said to her, “Sister, listen to me a moment. The most important ministry is to be the best wife you can be to your husband and the best mother you can be to your children. Everything else is secondary to that. Get things in the right order.”

Many sisters come to me and say, “Brother Prince, I have the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but my husband doesn’t believe in it.” And I usually reply, “Have you shown your husband anything that will make him believe in it? Have you become a better wife as a result of the baptism? Has your home become a sweeter place? Is there a more loving atmosphere? Do you show more care and consideration for your husband than you ever showed before? If not, don’t ask him to believe in the baptism, because he won’t.” If all the baptism does is make you go running off to meetings, leaving your husband alone, you are likely to be saddled for the rest of your life with a partner who does not believe what you believe.

The last word in the Old Testament is a curse. And do you know the cause of the curse? It is explained in the verses just before this last phrase: “I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and

dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The Holy Spirit certainly foresaw conditions at the end of this age. And He unerringly put His finger on the number one problem in the United States today—the home! There are broken homes with children in rebellion, and wives and husbands who cannot agree, who go their own ways and neglect their children.

And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice; that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

- Genesis 18:17-19

The Lord chose Abraham because He could trust him to be in a relationship with his family such that he would command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord.

The converse is equally true. Any nation where husbands and fathers fail to fulfill their obligations to their families cannot remain a great and mighty nation. That is true of the United States. If home life does not change in this nation, there is no hope for it.

The writing is on the wall. I maintain that Spirit-filled people with the full-gospel message should have an answer to this problem. If we don't have an answer, then where can the world look for an answer?

It is tragic indeed that there are multitudes of so-called "Spirit-filled" homes in which there is no harmony between husband and wife. If I understand anything, it is that the people who are anointed by the Holy Spirit have a message for their age. I do not believe we need to sit back with folded hands and say, "The situation is out of control; there's nothing that can be done." I believe the solution is within the church of Jesus Christ. I believe that the church is the salt of the earth, the light of the world. But, "If the salt loses its flavor [if it doesn't change the situation, refine the world, or hold back the forces of corruption]. . . . It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and to be trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13).

That is where the church of America is headed at the moment. But it does not need to happen. The remedy is: to repent, get right with God, and get right in your home. Don't go around offering the world a solution to a problem when it does not work in your own home. If you haven't got more than misery and disharmony to export, don't export it!

The church is so focused on the ends of the earth that it cannot see what is happening at the end of its nose. The first thing we need to do is to get right with the people closest to home. Be reconciled. Lay down your bitterness, your resentment, your hatred. Start there. ■

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Physical Address: 38 Hawdon Street, Sydenham, Christchurch
Telephone: (03) 366-4443 Email: admin@dpm.co.nz