

Some Threads and Trains of Thought and some Loose Ends

This epistle is an urgent apostolic appeal to one brother to personally keep the faith and in so doing model, encourage and urge other brothers and sisters to do the same. We are given much instruction in basic Christian conduct but this is not merely laying down a new Law to keep. Instead provisions are made for ensuring that saints of God are guarding, guiding and nourishing one another in the setting of the Assembly, the House of God. For this to work each individual must tend to his personal relationship with God and with others, within and without, walking with God, becoming godly, mature Christians. Aspire to be a godly person, so the apostle could say “O thou man of God.”

While the truth of the One Body and the Headship of Christ is not taught, or even mentioned, it is the basis for the instructions given Timothy. Nor is the doctrinal truth of life in Christ or the doctrine of a believers position in Christ used here as a basis for establishing the becoming conduct urged upon us. Again, neither is any appeal made to the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God as the means to carry out what is given us. These are all assumed to be known and practiced truths. The thrust of the letter therefore is not to teach and establish truth but to alert the faithful to the dangers rising about them/us, and to some extent among them/us, and prepare us to cope.

We are instructed in great detail on many topics that are a normal part of life's experience of believers among the people of God in His house. In this regard we are urged to govern our personal conduct so we can be used to build up, encourage, guard, nourish, guide and comfort one another in various circumstances that arise. We can be used to meet serious spiritual and physical needs of our brethren as they arise. Moreover we can live the truth, and teach and instruct the younger saints to overcome that “generational amnesia” that seems to so easily afflict second and third generation saints who have grown up in faithful, godly families among fellow saints in a spiritual local assembly. All of this carries forward the desires the Lord expressed while here, love, holiness, unity and peace among His own.

Who is left out of the named classes of beneficiaries of the mutual TLC* envisioned? Not men, women, elders, deacons families, widows, children, the elderly, needy, slaves, masters, rich, poor. What activities are left out? Not praying, teaching, oversight of the assembly, service for the assembly, care for the needy families, households, widows, elderly.

Another major theme or thread has to do with what could be called “government.” Not the government of the nation, state or city we live in but the government of the saints in the assembly as the House of God. God rules His own House. We need to let Him. And we are to know,

keep and observe the order He has established. The Law of Moses, mentioned at the very beginning of the letter, is immediately discarded as the rule of life or measure of godliness desired by God in this age. While it is still useful to make those who sin aware of their sin, those who would seek to impose it upon the saints are soundly rebuffed. By the end of chapter one, two are named as delivered to Satan because of their blasphemy. God is God! He does not tolerate blasphemous conduct in His House. His order is to prevail, nothing less and nothing else. The necessity of judgement in the house of God surfaces elsewhere in the epistle as well.

1Peter 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:

While the necessary judgements and rebukes mentioned here may make us uncomfortable and might seem distasteful or “unloving” to some believers, they are indeed God's will for us to observe, practice and uphold today. Note them well and the examples given for our enlightenment and compliance, not as law but as loving faithful obedience, in voluntary subjection and obedience God's order. Therein we glorify God. And therein we gain or “save” our brothers.

Along with government, order is instituted. Order in inter-age relationships, gender order in conduct, demeanor and attire. Public prayer, teaching, leadership, family responsibilities, mutual care and respect among all are expected among the people of God.

1Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. {Grk: tumult, unquietness, instability, commotion. }

Paul, in First Timothy, establishes “normalcy” in anticipation of the immense departure and decline about to overtake the saints. Second Timothy forecasts and exposes this departure and gives appropriate responses and remedies available to the faithful. One might simply accept the present state of Christendom as normal until we read the New Testament and compare it with what we see about us. (And amongst us?) Yet the path is plainly marked, often by the very absence of directives in scripture authorizing what is now common practice. While tradition is good and useful, it is to be rejected when it standardizes a departure from the word of God. But to the degree we each return (and separate ourselves) from the departure rampant in Christendom we have available to us the guidance of 1Timothy. We have the ministry of the Holy Spirit among us as we gather unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and seek to keep His word, Revelation 3:8. So, faithfully keep both 1Timothy and 2Timothy, both the guidance and the challenges.

By Ron Canner, May 31, 2006

*TLC =Tender Loving Care