

Patterns for us to observe. One might wonder at first why God permits all these details and greetings in epistles in His inspired word. I used to skip them, considering them to be irrelevant, mere courtesies, and a waste of time. God is wiser. He instructs us this way in the graces of brotherly love to be customarily seen in our daily interrelationships. He also incidentally gives us a paper trail of the movements of the apostles, their interaction with local assemblies and local unbelievers and some incidents in their lives. Also He instructs by example the conduct of normal routine assembly activities and interrelationships of the Lord's servants, all subject to the Lord and no one else. Yet they are seen to be respectful and supportive of one another, never with an independent attitude against another or an assembly. Apollos is encouraged to go to Corinth, not ordered, and when he declines there are no recriminations. The Corinthians apparently had high regard for Apollos and Paul makes sure they know he was not the one keeping Apollos away. Perhaps Apollos was aware of the immorality and disorder there and did not wish to appear to condone it by visiting as if nothing was amiss. We should be aware of this responsibility if we know of such a situation. Better to temporarily isolate a local assembly in that condition and let the Great High Priest deal with it. See Numbers 14:34-53. The Lord was indeed dealing with it in Corinth through Paul's letter.

Now Timothy is introduced and they are reminded to treat him respectfully despite his youth. We are not to brush off the young because of their youth, but nurture and encourage them and listen to their exercises and messages. The Lord speaks through young as well as old. Remember young Samuel? His message to old Eli was similar to that Timothy would carry to the Corinthian saints by this letter from Paul.

The order laid down in one epistle applies to all other assemblies as well, those then in existence and all since, including us. Note the numerous references, especially in the letters to the Corinthians, to the universal application of the precepts and instructions given. This is particularly needful because many professing believers tend to ignore, or dispose of, the order presented in the letters to the Corinthians. But it is as good now as it was then. God's principles don't change. For instance in chapter 16 the Corinthians are given the same instructions regarding a collection for the saints as were the assemblies of Galatia,

Now he is closing his long and full first letter to the Corinthians. He charges them to watch, stand, and to be strong. "Quit you like men" means more than just to

grow up and behave maturely, though they were indeed childish. Remember chapters 1- 4 (3:1-3), 11:21, 13:11, and 14:20? He is addressing the men, the brothers, those who were to have the responsible place of leadership and care in the assembly just as they were to have it in the home. Note chapter 11 and 14 particularly in this regard. They were to be real men, masculine, manly men! Taking tender, fatherly, caring responsibility for the well being of the assembly.

They were to do all things with a loving motive in a loving manner. (Remember chapter 8-10, and 13?) He then begs them to submit themselves to some brethren among them who had this deep caring spirit for their well being. These hadn't been ordained by any institution of man. They hadn't been chosen or even recognized by the assembly. They had simply **addicted themselves** to serving the saints there. Not usurping a place of authority or prominence but of devoting themselves to quiet service. A man named Stephanas and his whole household, family and servants, were the first saved in the province of Achaia. **These** are Paul's examples of those "quit like men." Those who the others were to follow as examples and submit themselves to, even if they perhaps weren't assertive, or particularly prominent humanly speaking. Instead, some there were competing for prominence and leadership thereby causing much discord and confusion. Paul points here to the real leaders in their midst. Recognize and encourage this kind of leadership in our assembly.

Now we find that this Stephanas, along with two others, had come to Paul. These brethren were of a kindred spirit with Paul and **refreshed his spirit** by their visit but not with ministry from the assembly, for Paul had refused it, ch. 9:12. We should refresh the spirit of others when we visit. They were to recognize and acknowledge these brethren who were about the Lord's business. Paul reminds the Corinthians that these men refreshed **their** spirits too, in case they hadn't noticed. They probably overlooked them and took them for granted. Perhaps these also were the ones who conveyed the questions to Paul that he answered in the epistle. They probably also conveyed their concerns about the state of the assembly. Even if this were unwelcome news for Paul, it refreshes his spirit to see their deep love and concern for their brethren and for the Lord's glory. Were they tattle tales? Paul assures that everyone knows who had visited him. Our visits, personal, phone or email, ought to be such that we will never have any occasion to fear exposure for having told someone something private. If we need help from someone else for a situation that

seems too difficult for us certainly we should seek it. If at all possible, all involved should be notified and given the opportunity to seek it together.

Now He greets them from his hosts in Ephesus and the other assemblies in the province of Asia.(western Turkey). These included Colosse, Troas and the seven assemblies in Asia to whom the Lord dictated messages, Revelation 1-3. Aquilla and his wife Priscilla, formerly of Corinth where they had first met Paul, send their special greeting as well. They continue faithful to the Lord, hosting a local assembly in the city of Ephesus in their home.. And **all** the brethren at Ephesus greet them. The unity of the Spirit is demonstrated here by the love between two assemblies on different continents and of differing nationality, 250 miles apart across open water, perhaps knowing each other only through Paul.

“Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.” Were they to be all kissy with “put on” love? Was it to be a mere formality observed like our handshake custom often seems? No, it was to be a holy kiss of true heartfelt respect and affection, displaying the unity that was theirs at such a cost to the Savior..

Paul has devoted much time and put great effort into writing this difficult letter to them. He has taken great

pains to patiently explain everything to them, including the underlying principles. He avoids merely delivering brusque commands and directives as we are so likely to prefer. We not only naturally like to order others around, we often prefer being given orders (a law) to being given Godly principles to spiritually apply.

But now he ends with a stern and solemn warning. A curse! One meant for any fakes that dared to continue among them. We are alerted to the possibility of these in ch. 12:1-3.

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”

“Anathema,” as we saw in the letter to the Galatian assemblies, means to be consigned to judgment. To hell! The foreign word “Maranatha,” which occurs here only, means **“the Lord Cometh!”** So He will! It is at His coming to judge, that those that love not the Lord Jesus will perish in their sins. Before that though, He returns for His own, as we learn in chapter 15. How can anyone not love Him after what He did for us.

By Ron Canner, March 10, 2004