

# Dealing With Strife In The Body

Sunday Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013

I have learned over the years by being obedient, if I obey God will do his part. God has given me words and I have stumbled around not wanting to give them, and that is what I do keep stumbling, wondering around. So I am going to read this psalm to you and share some points I believe The Lord will unfold to you as we go through the passages of scripture today. Psalms 133, I'm going to read it to you from the Message Bible I like the way it words it.

(1-3 How wonderful, how beautiful,  
when brothers and sisters get along!  
It's like costly anointing oil  
flowing down head and beard,  
Flowing down Aaron's beard,  
flowing down the collar of his priestly robes.  
It's like the dew on Mount Hermon  
flowing down the slopes of Zion.  
Yes, that's where God commands the blessing,  
ordains eternal life.)

Now he is talking about the body of Christ those who are born again, of course it is beautiful when natural brothers and sisters get long also. It is like the expensive anointing oil it is costly and valuable. It means when everybody gets along the anointing of God gets on everybody the whole body not just two or three. It graces everyone. We know the dew is refreshing. Now he is making a statement especially if you are following along in the King James Version that where there is union and harmony God can command His blessings. Not withholding but he commands them. Now that can be on every level our lives touch, it can be on our homes, and it can be at work or on our nation. I think we all know how our nation is in such turmoil from within. Our present government and leadership has not ministered peace to our nation. There is no unity there is no harmony and therefore it is hard for God to pour out His blessings, and open the door for the favor of God to rest upon us. It can also be in our churches if there is turmoil it is difficult for God to empty out, pour out His blessing, to open the windows of heaven in our behalf. Now I as a pastor or outside of not being a pastor or how ever I look at it or you look at it, I have a responsibility to not get into strife. Then in being in the office of Pastor I sometime have the responsibility to deal with strife it should arise in the local church. Now it is challenging enough to keep myself out of strife at different times but then it is also challenging then in relationship to the church. Now I found this over the years 'an ounce of prevention is far better than a pound of cure. If you wait to begin to teach or minister after something is full blown it is really challenging to get a reign or a hold on it.

Proverbs 17:14 The start of a quarrel is like a leak in a dam,  
so stop it before it bursts.

It talks about the progression of strife like a trickle going through a dam if it doesn't get repaired early then you have to let it run its course. He says that is the way strife progresses, it gets out of control. It can be stopped and repaired when it is just a little trickle we don't think it amounts to anything But James says the same thing in chapter 3 just a little spark can ignite a whole forest fire, a little spark if not taken care of can kindle a forest fire. It is really challenging as you and I know from the last few years to really get a forest fire under control it almost always has to burn out to get it back under control. That is the way strife is. So we begin in Psalms 133 it is pleasant, it is costly to dwell in unity and harmony. Strife and contention happens when we don't get our own way. It is rooted in selfishness, it is listed as one of the works of flesh in Galatians chapter 5, it is not a work of the Spirit. A church can survive bad

preaching, you have proven that. It can survive poverty, it can survive bad music, but it cannot survive strife! Galatians 5 it mentions the 17 works of the flesh and goes on to name the fruits of the Spirit and begins to teach on that. Galatians 5:13- in the Amplified

(13 For you, brethren, were [indeed] called to freedom; only [do not let your] freedom be an incentive to your flesh and an opportunity or excuse [for [a]selfishness], but through love you should serve one another.) all the devil has to do to weaken a church or a nation is to inject a little portion of strife and let it begin to grow and unchecked the results is not going to be good. It is just like you cowboys or cattlemen understand some people vaccinate their calves with a booster shot in the fall and some don't, but you can have some good native calves doing just fine after being weaned from a cow. But if you go and buy some calves from the sale barn and get them vaccinated with live RBI virus and the next thing you know your native calves are getting sick because of the live virus you gave to the others and you got to take care of them. It wouldn't have happened if you would have just vaccinated all the calves or not have vaccinated the ones you bought, but that might not be too wise. That is what the devil does with strife he injects a little over here in the family sows the seed then if not checked, taken care of, or doctored, it will spread. That is the way it works.

In II Corinthian 2: Paul said we don't want to be ignorant of satan devices. I ministered here on forgiveness and made a statement that I'm really unfamiliar with making that 'forgiveness is not about being right but about DOING right'. That was brought to my remembrance this morning in relationship to strife, because strife or contention always originates from getting our way or things not going the way we thought they should go. Really the Bible teaches us the different levels of maturity, there's babies, then there is childhood, then adulthood or maturity. And he said strife and contention is what we would call a symptom or behavior of immature Christians I Corinthians 3:1-3. It says we behave ourselves in strife like mere unchanged people, or the world or not born again. It doesn't mean we are not Christian, but it just simply means hey I got some more growing yet to do. Now when we talk about strife and contention there isn't anyone that is off limits. They get into strife or contention whether it is what we would call a borrowed offense or a direct offense. For me personally it is a greater temptation for me to take a borrowed offense than an offense directly to me. I have the ability if it is directed to me to let it run off easier. Now let me explain borrowed offense to you, when one of my friends get treated wrong I have the tendency to rush to their side and begin to defend them. Now that is not all bad in itself but if I get involved in the strife, it is wrong. As Margaret said we began out here in the fall of '77 that's a lot of years, and we have seen the good and then we have seen something not so good. We've seen churches literally come to not, some close the doors because the leadership would not deal with strife. The end is never good. Christian people want to do right they just may not have knowledge how to do right, or what the rewards of walking in love or walking in forgiveness is. I want to give you some principles in relation to what our responsibility is in relationship to strife or disunity in a local church. Don't limit it to there it could be at your work or in your home the principles are the same. You're going to have those opportunities to practice these from time to time, but I'm going to share some with you biblically and if you would turn with me to Ephesians 4:2 & 3 from the Amplified Translation ( 2 Living as becomes you] with complete lowliness of mind (humility) and meekness (unselfishness, gentleness, mildness), with patience, bearing with one another and making allowances because you love one another.

3 Be eager and strive earnestly to guard and keep the harmony and oneness of [and produced by] the Spirit in the binding power of peace.) That is a challenge right there to learn to live like that with patience. I think to myself practicing patience. I am reminded that I need to practice or develop patience as part of my Christian maturity. Throughout the church or work place you are going to have people around you that when problems come they either nip it in the bud or it is like pouring gas on a fire. They can either put it out or cause it to spread. I want to say thank you to the close staff they are the kind that put it out and do what they can to stop that. In all honesty when strife or contention arises if you could just hear both sides you know it will just smooth on out. Now there is a time when it needs to be

confronted, and there is a time you need to put it on the shelf by praying about it. You can't confront out of anger you confront out of love and concern. I'm working on my patience, listen on our close staff if it ever happens that I come in, in a bad mood somebody will confront me. A lot of times I don't even know I am in a bad mood, but then I think about it and well you know I could have had a better attitude. You see we need to confront one another in that type of relationship so it doesn't spread. If I come in a bad attitude consistently you what it's going to do? It is going to spread to everybody else on staff. Making allowances that will kind of through water on the fire or nip something in the bud. Now like for all of us there are some people it is easier to make allowances for, because we love them we care for them. We actually know them and know that is not their actual behavior and when I think of this I always think of most of you like animals you have a dog that is really nice but if that dog actually got caught in a steel trap it would hurt you if you tried to release it. Unless you throw a cover or a canvas over it. But you make allowances because it is hurt it's in pain. That is not it's natural or normal behavior. Really it is not a Christian's natural behavior to be mean spirited but unfortunately there are mean spirited Christians but make allowances for them to develop and grow because we love one another. Now this next part I have touched on it briefly to be eager and strive earnestly to guard and keep the harmony. It speaks of an effort; it speaks of doing something on purpose. Now actually sometimes in our homes, for the sake of peace, there are things we don't say that you might want to say. The same in other relationships. Why? Because we are guarding the harmony, we are striving to keep unity. Be eager! Strive earnestly! That's a job, to guard and keep the harmony. You see this is where you have people come along and put the fire out, or you have people come along and throw gas on the fire where it gets totally out of hand. Oneness that is produced by the defining power of peace. Now if we learn to follow the Holy Spirit it is going to lead to peace. Sometimes just speaking our mind is following the flesh and not peace or the Spirit. Now Corinthians 1:10 Amp.

( 10 But I urge and entreat you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in perfect harmony and full agreement in what you say, and that there be no dissensions or factions or divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in your common understanding and in your opinions and judgments.) From my stand point is a very challenging verse of scripture and it is what you and I would call the finished product of a person that is developing love. He is talking about what we would call mature unity. He is talking about one that is putting their feeling or flesh down for the sake of unity and harmony and to experience peace. Maybe when I teach along this line the thought comes up that we must be perfect that there would never be opportunity for strife or anything like that but that is certainly not true. Now the local church is where you are really going to learn to walk in peace if you stay hooked. The local church is where you are going to learn to forgive biblically. The local church then where we begin to learn this, healing even on the inside, even the emotions begins to take place. But if we don't learn it in the local church then we become separated cut off from the local church. That is not always good, sometimes we never connect the dots. Unforgiveness opens the way to a pretty dismal path, a situation can be turned around if you just forgive. Now some situations are more challenging to forgive than others, but God still asks us to forgive. I could share with you churches that have split, I can share with you churches that no longer open their doors and it is simply because of strife. I can give you examples out of men and women's lives that the purpose of God in their lives is on hold because they harbor unforgiveness and strife for the long haul, not just something that pops up from time to time. It has to be dealt with; I'm talking about a life style. Now turn to Proverbs 17:14 (The beginning of strife is as when water first trickles [from a crack in a dam]; therefore stop contention before it becomes worse and quarreling breaks out.)

He is liken that trickle in the dam as insignificant if it is given attention to and repaired but if not the dam will crumble and fall and the water behind will course down into the valley wreaking havoc and damage. When it breaks out it just about has to run its course. It is like the forest fire, it burns its way out. So he is saying deal with it early, and that is difficult in itself, because you can't deal with it out of

anger but you deal with it quickly. Now here is the truth, let me read you another passage of scripture, (for lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisper contention ceases) Now to put that in a language you and I understand, something happened that is going to cause strife, but he is saying the talk about what happened will be more damaging than what did happen, why it spreads. So he words it just a little differently here, quit putting wood on the fire if you want the fire to go out. The way we keep fueling strife is by talking about it in a wrong since or by letting our fleshly emotions get caught up. Pretty soon you have everyone around caught up in it, and then you have a forest fire burning. To me I do not mind incidents happening, but I don't like them not being checked and handled biblically. Now how do we handle something biblically? Where words have been spoken, or strife has begun to flare up? We'll we are going to stop feeding it number one! We want it to go out. Why do you and I want to talk about an incident when it has happened to us, to get someone on our side! We have got to have someone siding with us so we'll be justified. So we want to tell it to our close friends so they will take our side. Then if we are not careful we got something burning that you really didn't intend to start. So how do we deal with that? Well we stop talking about it. The talk about the incident is worse than the incident, far, far more damaging. The incident may have been very hurtful and tough but the talk about it is far more damaging than the incident. In Matthew 18 gives us specific directions how to deal with when we are hurt or wronged. Go to that individual, first go to that individual with intent of bringing reconciliation but do we practice that very often? Usually we go to everybody else but that individual. Now to me in Matthew 18 it is really out there in relationship to incidents to unforgiveness or things that do happen, whether it is in church or outside of the church. But then if they do not hear you, you take a witness with you that every word can be established. Then if they do not hear you basically take it to the church or the leadership and if they don't hear that you cut them off. Now what it is saying in 'cut off' he says you treat them like a publican. That is someone that is not born again in other words you don't use this person now to teach a Sunday school class, you don't use them to take up the offering, or to greet the people, you don't get them for your prayer partner because they are out there where the Bible teaches plainly in 1Peter 3 that your prayers are hindered when we are in strife and contention. And so you don't use them like you would want to use a Christian friend. They have some things inside they are not dealing with, some of Paul's ministry treated some people that way and the ones that we have recorded they come back and made great Christian people. But they dealt with that root on the inside that was causing them to stumble and fall and no exemplify the character of Jesus Christ. Philippians 4:2- (I entreat and advise Euodia and I entreat and advise Syntyche to agree and to work in harmony in the Lord.

3 And I exhort you too, [my] genuine yokefellow, help these [two women to keep on cooperating], for they have toiled along with me in [the spreading of] the good news (the Gospel), as have Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the Book of Life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always [delight, gladden yourselves in Him]; again I say, Rejoice!) Paul is in prison and this is one of the sweetest epistles he writes, there are no open rebukes or corrections except what I have shared with you. Now here are a couple of women that are believed to be deaconesses with the gifts of helps that are used in the church, that have had some kind of disagreement, what he is saying her when you read it in context is these two women need to work this out before it becomes public or spreads. Entreat them to get it worked out then he goes on about rejoicing in The Lord and doesn't treat it as any big deal. Just address it and get it worked out before it spread. Philippians 2:2 Fill up and complete my joy by living in harmony and being of the same mind and one in purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention.) What was going to make Paul happy? He has these people that are close to him that are capable of putting out the little fires. He is going to be happy by watching people work out their differences proving their Christian principles. You and I cannot go through life, the Bible says, it is impossible to go through life without offenses coming. We learn how to handle them where they are not so devastating. I understand there are those big

things that can be very devastating that take a special measure of grace to overcome and endure. But God gives grace and more grace and more grace. Romans 12:

(16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits.

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is honest and proper and noble [aiming to be above reproach] in the sight of everyone.

18 If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.) In Hebrews address this in chapter 12 and really indicates there are going to be some people you are not going to be able to live at peace with, just not going to be able to do it. But he says here if it is possible, live at peace. Now Romans 14:

(19 So let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual up building (edification and development) of one another.) Now we are to aim for something, pursue something that makes for harmony and for mutual edification and development of one another. Now that is a challenge sometimes but we are to actually pursue that though it is much easier to pursue what the flesh says at times. We are to pursue what makes for harmony. Not to close with what we began with in Psalms 133 where there is unity and harmony God open the windows of Heaven and pours out blessings. Now there is not anyone that can keep you from walking in love and peace, and unity and harmony, you may be challenged through flesh and blood not to do so but the only one that can keep you from walking love and unity and harmony is ourselves. It is a choice that WE make. Psalms 133 KJV (133 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.)

You like your home better where there is harmony and unity. God literally commands His blessings there. Somehow we have got to have the attitude of Abraham, Lot became selfish, Lot and Abraham's men got into little word fights and strife, word got to Abraham he went to Lot and says we are brothers we shouldn't be in strife and neither should our herdsmen. Abrahams gave Lot the choice of the whole land before him and Lot took the plains that were well watered, Abraham took what was left then God blessed him with more land upon more land upon more land. You and I cannot afford the luxury of strife over the long haul. Stay out of it; learn to deal with it, ask God to help you. Life is pretty short, real short. God has too many good things for you and me not to be over where His blessings are. Amen