

August 13, 2017

Strife In The Church
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Strife, contention and disharmony in our lives and in the local church or on the corporate level are destructive forces which unless stopped will cause a great deal of harm. Church history over the years has shown how because of strife in the church, leadership has failed, congregations have split and the move of God has stopped. How do we respond when the adversary tries to cause contention in the church, are we to set back and do nothing?

In the following scripture, Paul is teaching the Galatians how the enemy tries to destroy the church and what is necessary to stop the enemy from reaching his goal, we have been given authority over him and we must learn to exercise that authority not allowing strife, contention and disharmony to become a part of our relationships with one another, following not just after the flesh, but after the spirit.

Gal 5: 13-15 " 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 selfishness], but through love you should serve one another. 14 For the whole Law [concerning human relationships] is complied with in the one precept, You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself. 15 But if you bite and devour one another [in partisan strife], be careful that you [and your whole fellowship] are not consumed by one another." AMP

v. 15 learn to walk in love in order to not be consumed - this principle is necessary in every type of relationship, our marriage, our jobs, or with other people

This verse shows that strife happens over a progression of time but it can be stopped at any time if dealt with in the beginning. We have a responsibility in dealing with strife and the word of God teaches us those principles.

Pro 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." AMP

These scriptures are speaking to believers who are born again, but are still living as unchanged and unspiritual men, having strife and envyings among them. There is no growth or maturity in their lives, they must still be fed the milk of the word, there is no revelation knowledge.

1 Cor 3:1-3 "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" KJV

1 Cor 3:3 "For you are still [unspiritual, having the nature] of the flesh [under the control of ordinary impulses]. For as long as [there are] envying and jealousy *and* wrangling and factions among you, are you not unspiritual *and* of the flesh, behaving yourselves after a human standard *and* like mere (unchanged) men?" AMP

v. 3 Paul is looking at their behavior and listening to their speech and it is no different than unsaved men

Prayers can be hindered especially between husbands and wives if there is strife or contention in the marriage. You are heirs together with the blessings of God and the power of God. The spirit of strife can be felt.

1 Peter 3:7 "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as

unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." KJV
James 3:16-18 "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." KJV

How does strife affect a church? It effects everyone that attends the church regardless if a person is directly involved, it will cause relationships to be split as well as the congregation to split and take sides in a matter and it takes time to recover from a spirit of strife.

Num 12:1-15 "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it. 3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) 4 And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. 5 And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. 6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. 7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? 9 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. 10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. 11 And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. 12 Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. 13 And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. 14 And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. 15 And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again." KJV

This scripture tells of the strife that was evident in the lives of Miriam, Aaron and Moses. Moses and his wife did not get along, there were several things that happened in their marriage causing strife as a result, and his sister and brother did not like her because she was of a different culture. They began to question whether the call, the leadership that God had placed on Moses was in fact true, or were they being left out of what Gods plans for the children of Israel were. Because of them questioning and the fact they did not like his wife, God answered their question, saying that Moses was the chosen one and then put leprosy on Miriam. Moses intervened for her but she still was placed outside the camp for a period of time before she was healed. This caused no movement and nothing happened with the children of Israel until she was brought back in. God had spoken to Moses because he was the leader that God had chosen, but the contention, strife and rebellion that had taken place among Miriam and Aaron led to these results.

Strife always has a leader and brings others into the situation; they are usually very charismatic, able to convince others that there should be change or that there are problems needing to be addressed if a seed has been planted. Strife found in a local church or corporate body will cause a stop to be placed on the entire congregation, there will be no forward motion, even though there are only a few people involved.

Pro 20:3 "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling." KJV

Make allowances because we love one another, we must be eager to keep harmony and oneness of the Spirit. When dealing with people, we realize that most will cover up the hurt on the inside of themselves, but because of these hurts we must make allowances for them. Don't be the one stirring up the hurts and disharmony that they may have.

Eph 4:1-3 "I therefore, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to *and* beg you to walk (lead a life) worthy of the [divine] calling to which you have been called [with behavior that is a credit to the summons to God's service, 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." AMP

1 Cor 1:10 "I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose." NLT

1 Cor 1:10 "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." AMP

In a situation that you may be facing on your job if a decision has been made, don't be in disagreement with your boss, keep your opinions to yourself, be of the same mind. Refrain from wanting to do things your way, even though they may be right or better.

Phil 2:2 "Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose." NLT

Psalms chapter 133 is the result of having unity or harmony in the church. Days are wasted if we live in strife. Unity gets on everyone.

Psalms 133:1-3 "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in **unity!** 2 It is like the precious ointment poured on the head, that ran down on the beard, even the beard of Aaron [the first high priest], that came down upon the collar *and* skirts of his garments [consecrating the whole body]. 3 It is like the dew of [lofty] Mount Hermon and the dew that comes on the hills of Zion; for there the Lord has commanded the blessing, even life forevermore [upon the high and the lowly]." AMP