

Dwelling in Peace

by Anton Bosch

Anton Bosch emphasizes the vital importance of peace and unity in the church as a reflection of God's character and a source of blessing.

Scripture: Psalm 133, Matthew 5:9, John 13:35, John 17:21, Romans 15:33, 1 Corinthians 14:33, Titus 3:10

Topics: "Church Unity", "Godly Peace"

Description

Anton Bosch emphasizes the importance of peace and unity within the church, highlighting how the enemy seeks to destroy this precious commodity. He stresses that the church should be a sanctuary of peace, love, and acceptance in a chaotic world under Satan's control. Bosch points out that God is a God of peace and order, desiring harmony within His body, the church, as a reflection of the unity within the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He challenges believers to actively work towards preserving peace, resolving conflicts, and promoting love amongst brethren, as this is the identifying mark of true disciples of Jesus.

Transcript

Probably one of the most precious commodities in the local assembly is peace amongst the members. For this reason the enemy of the church will do all in his power to destroy peace and to bring people into conflict with one another.

David said "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). It is indeed a pleasant and wonderful experience when there is peace in the church while disharmony is one of the most unpleasant things in any church.

In the world we know we will have conflict, strife and animosity. This world is under Satan's control and when he is in control, he makes sure that things are chaotic, confused and filled with strife. It is especially hard for Christians to live in the world because of this chaos and also because the world is at constant war with the true believer. Thus the church has to be the one place where the believer can find peace, harmony and order. The church should be like a cool air conditioned building where one can find sanctuary from the heat of the summer sun.

One of the characteristics of God is that He is a God of peace and of order (Romans 15:33). This aspect of God's person can be seen in creation. Everything, from the smallest atom to the biggest galaxy displays God's order and harmony. At the highest level, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist in absolute and perfect harmony, unity and peace and God wants to see the same harmony reflected in His body the

church. "God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1Corinthians 14:33).

Jesus said that the identifying mark of true believers and true churches would be the love they have for one another. Even unbelievers would be drawn to believe by the testimony of love amongst the brethren. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). He prayed "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21).

Yet, it seems that the opposite is often true. It is extremely stressful when there is no peace in the one place where we should be able to find peace. Christians should be looking forward to the next time they can meet together to experience the peace, love and acceptance that is so absent in their daily lives. But when there is conflict in the church the very place that should be our source of strength and encouragement, becomes the source of further aggravation and stress. That is very sad.

But unfortunately, many churches are places of stress and conflict as brothers strive to promote themselves and their agendas at the expense of others. Sometimes Pharisees join the church and they bring their nit-picky legalism with them. At other times self-seeking and self-centered men do all they can to prove that they are superior to others and put down everyone who poses a threat to their status. There are many ways in which the peace in the local church is threatened and disturbed and every member should do everything they can to remove any obstacle to peace.

Sometimes a tumultuous situation can be calmed when brothers humble themselves and repent of the things they brought into the church that causes trouble and upset. Often this takes a real miracle for God to change hearts. So we need to pray for the Lord's intervention in the affairs of the church. But at other times peace will only come when the offending individuals are removed. At times the Lord will remove the trouble maker and at other times it is up to the church to expel the cause of the division. "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:10-11).

When there is peace in the church, every member must do everything they can to preserve, protect and promote peace. The very smallest offence must be removed before it becomes a bigger problem. This often takes humility on the part of people who need to ask for forgiveness and who often need to make restitution in order to correct the wrong and to restore harmony as soon as possible. It is not just up to leaders to defend peace in the church. Every member needs to work towards preserving peace. This they should do, first in their own relationships, and second by acting as peacemakers between others. When brothers gossip they promote strife, but we should rather be interceding for one another with each other in order to make peace. Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Peace is important because of how wonderful it is for those who enjoy the tranquility and blessing of peaceful and loving relationships. David describes it as the anointing oil that flowed from Aaron's head to his beard and garment (Psalm 133:2). The oil soothes, heals and makes the skin glow and unity between brethren soothes and heals the soul and causes the church to glow with warmth and health.

But peace is also important because it brings God's blessing. The Lord will not bless a divided church but He commands the blessing when brothers dwell together in harmony (Psalm 133:3). Someone once said that the Holy Spirit is like a dove which is easily scared away when there is division and disharmony and

that He will only rest on those who are at perfect peace. That is true. Does the atmosphere in your church invite the Holy Spirit or chase Him away? Is there unity and harmony so that the Lord commands a blessing, or has He disassociated Himself from your fellowship because it reflects the chaos of the world rather than the peace of God?

Are you actively working for unity in your church or are you contributing towards a discord? Remaining neutral in a dispute does not necessarily promote peace. Often those on the sideline need to take a position against the troublemaker(s) in order to bring them to a place of repentance. As long as you remain silent the troublemakers think they are right and continue their provocation.

Finally, peace and unity is more than the mere absence of conflict. True peace can only exist when brothers and sisters truly love one another in real and practical ways. Some folk may not be able to preach, teach or contribute in one of the more visible ways, but every one of us can make a real difference by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. In fact, it is our duty and privilege.

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