

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN HELP EACH OTHER BECOME STRONGER IN TRIAL

1 Peter 3:7-11

Intro: Have you ever thought about what it would be like if you were the only Christian in the world? Think of how hard it would be to face all of life's challenges, temptations and trials without a single person to talk to, without a single person to pray with, without a single person to give you encouragement.

One of the great blessings of being a Christian is having people around you who care, who are pulling for you, who lift you up when you are down, who share life with you. In Peter 4, Peter tells each of how to build a wall of protection around our spiritual family. As we study this tonight, think about how you can become a greater source of encouragement and support to all of your brethren here.

There are things we must do alone in order to overcome persecution. But there are many things that we can all do together to help each other in times of suffering and distress.

BE SOBER AND WATCH UNTO PRAYER

Develop a serious spiritual outlook. This mindset centers upon the fact that the Lord is coming. (Perhaps Peter had in mind for his immediate readers the destruction of Jerusalem, but the point is the same). The Christian life calls for:

Soberness--temperate, self-controlled

Be watchful unto prayer--To be calm and collected with a view to praying.

All of us owe it to our brethren to develop a positive and serious attitude toward being a Christian. Nothing demoralizes a Christian quicker than to see other Christians lose their interest, compromise principles of right, and get caught up in the world. How about you? Are you working on your own attitude and spirituality?

HAVE FERVENT CHARITY AMONG YOURSELVES

Above all things means it ought to be a priority for us. It is most important. Fervent means "stretched out". It conveys effort and intensity.

Charity is agape, the love that seeks the highest good of others regardless of their behavior!

Love covers a multitude of sins:

The word "cover" is used in the word of God as a substitute for "forgiveness".

A multitude is many.

A genuine love for other people will enable us to forgive them when they fail and encourage them to do better rather than gloat in their failures and spread them around to others.

Take a look at your love. Your spiritual family needs your forgiveness.

USE HOSPITALITY WITHOUT COMPLAINT

Hospitality is "love of strangers". It conveyed the idea of receiving into one's home or making provision for one who traveled from place to place. Nothing makes Christians more vulnerable to the world than the isolation of coming into a new city or situation without a welcoming family.

There are some good ways to show hospitality to the brethren:

Get to know the names of those who attend with us.

Greet each person with courtesy and kindness.

Invite someone into your home for a meal or invite a group to join you at a restaurant after a service.

Offer your help to newcomers.

SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN A WAY THAT GLORIFIES GOD

Use your "gifts" to serve others. All that I have belongs to God. I have received it as a result of his many-sided grace. I need to use it to His glory! If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.

It doesn't mean all a preacher can do is quote Scripture. It does mean that the only thing I need to teach is what God's word says! That means I teach only the truth which has been revealed by God!

It was this verse that gave rise to the restoration slogan, "We speak where the Bible speaks, we are silent where the Bible is silent."

If any man serve, let him serve by the strength God supplies.

In whatever we are doing for the Lord we need to be dependent upon him for power to accomplish our task.

We need to pray often and fervently about our work toward others for his help.

As we use our gifts the emphasis then is not on ourselves but upon God who gives the word and provides the power for fruitful work. God then gets the glory for what we say and do. And that will bring strength to all of our spiritual family.

Conclusion: There is enough work in this paragraph to last a lifetime. As Christians we are committed to a lifetime of loving service to our fellow-Christians. To build a wall of love around them that will protect them. That wall is built one brick at a time. All of us need to start with ourselves. We need to ask ourselves, "How can I implement these things in my life so that I can protect the brethren around me?"