

No Pain/No Gain

(10/29/03)

Greetings to the Church From Betsy's House,

It is my prayer that this letter will stimulate you to do the one thing most Christians really hate to do, THINK!!!

In Romans Paul writes this indictment against unbelievers with the following words in chapter 1 verse 18, "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them."

Permit me to draw your attention to the two statements I underlined as they relate to responding to the teaching of God's Word. Whenever we, as humans, do not want to know, that is admit to, something that is obvious we must "push it down". That often takes the form of trying to ignore or avoid the obvious Truth that is being brought to our immediate attention. In our day in time we might hear words like "blow it off" as a apt description of that method of suppressing.

Now sometimes that is not always a viable way because a particular truth is being presented in such a way that it is virtually impossible to do so. When the issue is "in your face", so to speak, it is much harder to just avoid it or ignore it. When that becomes the case the person must resort to a different means of suppression. Often that means is to depreciate the source or the subject. That is, make the messenger, or the message, insignificant. That would find articulation with words or attitudes that would say that it was really trying to "make a mountain out of a mole hill". They may even grudgingly agree that it is true but there are just other things in God's Word that are so much more important.

I must admit that I fell into that attitude for many, many years. And I will further confess that it was to my detriment and stunted my spiritual growth.

I remember, as a young Christian, how I would listen to the "old timers" discuss (and oftentimes argue) about what I was certain were minor issues. A good example of that is reflected in a recent article in the Berean Searchlight entitled "Are the Twelve Apostles in the Body of Christ?"

That subject, at first blush, would seem to be a rather theologically technical question for a "lay person" to contemplate. Is it something that will overtly affect their walk with Christ? Is it important in the overall outcome of a person's salvation? In fact, what, if any, is the value in even considering such a thing today?

The reality is that everything in God's Word is vital part of the coherent whole. Whenever we do not consider every aspect as it is presented we allow for a dilution of His Word. It gets watered down. It reduces the clarity, the power and the resulting confidence that clarity brings with it.

May I remind all of us about what the Lord, Himself, had to say in Matthew 16:6, "'Be careful', Jesus said to them, 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Saducees'". Paul applies that Truth

when he writes in I Corinthians 5:6, ..."don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?"

The principle is simple, true and cannot be refuted. When it comes to God's Word every consideration is of utmost value and even a "little" yeast will affect the whole.

Granted, there are some considerations that are beyond our particular knowledge at any given point in our spiritual growth and education. When I was in the first grade I could not yet understand Algebra. That, however, did not make any discipline in math unimportant or unattainable. I had to do some growing in knowledge before I could understand the more advanced math.

Be careful though because by the admission of that fact many fall prey to yet another convenient way to use one of the most used "truth suppressers" around. It sounds like this, "oh, I just don't know the Bible good enough to understand". And, with that one simple assertion they sidestep any attempt to progress and continue to remain in the first grade. Let me raise this question, what would you think of a person who is 25 years old, of average intelligence, normal in every way and yet still in the first grade? When asked why they are still only in the first grade they respond, "I know all I need to know in order to live. And besides my mom and dad take care of me and it's so much fun to not have to do any of that old hard work stuff grownups do."

Sad to say that is the attitude of a vast number of Christians today. Let me draw your attention to what Paul had to say to some of this in the Corinthian church. That group of believers, by the way, saw themselves as very, very spiritual... the Spiritually elite of their day. The sad irony is that they were unquestionably the most carnal of the churches addressed in Paul's epistles. Listen to I Corinthians 3:1 & 2, "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly---mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you are not ready for it." We must be careful to take Paul's admonition in II Timothy 2:15 to heart and "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of God".

We must remember that at some point we will reap the rewards of what we have done for Christ and all the clever suppression we use won't stand up in the light of His Presence.

In II Corinthians 13:2 Paul admonishes the Corinthians that he gave them "warning" when he was with them the second time and that he was now repeating it. "On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier...". In other words the warnings are over and the result is now up to them. They, the Corinthians, are the ones who have the responsibility to respond or not respond. No one else will be held accountable and so it is with each one of us and how we respond to what God teaches us from His Word today.. Each and every one of us will give an account of how we responded to His Word. When challenged from his Word we must respond, it is not an option. Sidestepping, forgetting, ignoring or any other means of "holding down" will not stand up in the Light. Suppression may allow us to ignore the Truth for the time being but in the end the result will be made manifest in accord with the Word. We can never say we were never warned once we have been given the Truth according to the Revelation given to and through the Apostle Paul.

Finally, "holding down" is much harder than entering into adulthood. It's like "kicking at the goad". Hebrews 12:11, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." In the words of today's body builder, "no pain, no gain". Dig in to His Word and grow.

We will be meeting this Friday at IHOP once again at 7PM if you plan to eat first. If not join us at 7:30 as we continue our study in II Corinthians.

In His Love,

Tomme