

Whose Interests Are We Seeking?

By Lynn Warner

“For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.”

(Philippians 2:20-21)

Paul and Timothy were truly united in Christ. They had “kindred spirits.” The word “kindred” means “of the same nature” or “of the same attributes (affections, dispositions, etc).” Paul wanted to send Timothy to learn the condition of the Philippians, because he was of the same nature. What nature is that?

The Bible presents the nature of Jesus. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul reminds them about Jesus’ nature: *“Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”* (Philippians 2:8). We are to have the same kindred inner nature to humble ourselves in obedience, as Jesus declared in Matthew 10:38: *“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”* If Christians are taking up their crosses and following Jesus, they are united.

We are to be kindred spirits, living and walking by the Holy Spirit, as Paul describes in Galatians 5:25: *“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”* Paul states, *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh”* (Galatians 5:16). In fact, the flesh must be crucified, as we read in verse 24: *“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* Paul wanted Timothy to be with the Saints at Philippi, because his goal was that they only conduct themselves *“in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents”* (Philippians 1:27b-28a).

Surrendering to God means living in obedience, taking up your cross, following Jesus, and living by the Spirit. This will bring unity with others who are also surrendering. When we make unity the focus, instead of surrender, we have the wrong focus. True Godly unity is the result of being in Christ – kindred spirits who are genuinely concerned for the welfare of others, not seeking our own interests but seeking the interests of Christ. Whose interests are we seeking?

Sometimes we may see the appearance of unity. All of us may seem loving and kind, but when we are tested in situations, the spirit that inspires us is revealed. Our interests may be for ourselves, not for others’ “welfare” in the interests of Jesus Christ. Initially, we may show a form of kindness and love, but inwardly, we may want authority over others. Our love is to be without hypocrisy. Paul warned of people *“holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power”* (2 Timothy 3:5a).

Other times the appearance of unity may generate a sense of confusion. James 3:16 KJV reminds us that *“where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”* My Bible notes that strife is “self-seeking.” So, we can ask God to help us discern what in us is self-seeking and repent. No doubt we can all relate to experiences that didn’t “feel right,” but we can’t seem to put those experiences into words. We may sense “love” and think we all have the same “beliefs.” We may see “good works.” But recall Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:23 where He will declare to those who prophesied, cast out demons, and performed many miracles in His name, *“I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.”* God knows what spirit we are worshipping in; are we worshipping in spirit and truth? Are we kindred

spirits?

Though God wants unity, loyalty to His will sometimes brings separation and division with those outside His will. Jesus came to bring reconciliation and peace with God for those who believe and obey Him. He knew what was in man – sin, which is lawlessness, enmity, and hatred of God. Recall that the spiritual leaders of His time on earth wanted to kill Him! If we are genuinely concerned for the welfare of others, and not like the Pharisees, we uphold the truth and glory of God, as did Jesus, rather than suppress it. We must be encouraged to overcome sin and uphold the truth like the Brethren in Revelation 12:11: *“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”*

In conclusion, we are to be kindred spirits, with the same inner nature as Jesus. His nature was faithfulness and loyalty to God and His glory, which He expressed through obedience to God, even obedience “to the point of death, even death on a cross.” When we submit our will with its passions and desires to God, taking up our cross and following Jesus in obedience, we are living and walking by the Spirit, and the Spirit brings “unity of the Spirit.” We cannot make or produce unity – God does! May we be kindred spirits, genuinely concerned for each other’s welfare and seeking after the interests of Christ, not simply our own interests.