

The healing medicine of reconciliation

Dealing with our spiritual weakness is both crucial and painful because it is sin, and our sin causes a breakdown of our relationships. The remedy is Reconciliation, and this requires we die to self. Dying to self isn't easy, but it is necessary if we are to love our neighbour and God as we should. Humility and self-denial are part of taking up our cross daily to follow Christ. The Church belongs to Jesus Christ to live as His loving community. A rift in the Church is a wound to the body of Christ Himself.

'He was saying to them all, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, this is the one who will save it."

Luke 9:23-24

Reconciliation is a bitter medicine that must be swallowed whole

The work of reconciliation is the forgotten part of sanctification. Ignorance of the fullness of God's will cherished in the heart chokes off spiritual growth. And because the church is composed of believers and unbelievers, and the believers are mostly at vastly different levels of knowledge and obedience to the word of God, even though most think their knowledge is adequate, fractures and rifts to the unity and the life of the body of Christ are inevitable. These painful events God uses as tests of faith, in order to bring out the beauty of holiness when His word is finally known and obeyed. Therefore, it is important that we listen to the Spirit working through the pastors and teachers that the Lord provides for our edification.

Ephesians 4:11-13

We don't fully know what we don't live out daily. Without our cross we want our private faith. Without our cross we want our personal interpretation of the word of God. Without our cross we live for ourselves. Without our cross we won't put others first. Without our cross we want Church on our own terms. Without our cross the oneness of the Church is dead to us.

Because our sins are relational, our relationships must be restored, so our failings are not to be swept under the carpet to be ignored, thinking it has been dealt with, for then the offence remains to eat away what is left of our

life. For how shall we know the healing spirit of reconciliation, unless all parties know the wrong has been addressed?

Carpet lifting is the way of the world without God. Christians must face the music and take their bitter medicine without any excuse or avoidance of their responsibility to love all those involved, sacrificially. When we fail to love as we should, the shadow of death hangs over the relationship.

"I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:36-37

'Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.' James 5:16

Because we sin much, we confess often.

What does God say about how we should be reconciled when we have problems with each other?

No one is an island. All those who are true believers are joined to Christ as His body on earth. *'So that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same care for one another. And if one part of the body suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if a part is honoured, all the parts rejoice with it.'* 1 Corinthians 12:25-26

There is one Lord who cannot suffer us to be divided. There can be no clinging to the idea of having a private faith that denies love for others by obeying God's word. All who are of true faith are one life in the Spirit of God. True Christianity means we have One Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one life, one truth, one hope, one love, one purpose, one body, one bride, one commitment. This truth is what draws us together in Christ, even if the majority of us cannot yet perceive it to be true. Unrealised oneness happens because the command to deny self and take up our cross has not yet fully been accepted by us all to be necessary for one Life in Christ.

1. We need to be reconciled for Christ's sake who is our head. For in Him we live together as His life in the Church

We need to be reconciled quickly when unity is threatened. *"So, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has*

something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

Matthew 5:23-24

2. We speak God's truth in love. The truth corrects what is not God's

Because of the stain of our fallen nature, our feelings are not a good guide to the truth, so our negative reactions require reconciliation.

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” John 17:17

‘but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is, Christ,’

Ephesians 4:15

Self-denial will mean faithful witnessing to the truth of God's word even if we are persecuted for doing so. This witness is not self at work but God's love working to overcome self.

3. We are to be active in our listening

We need to listen with intent in order to know what is actually going on.

‘Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.’

James 1:19

4. We must forgive as we have been forgiven

‘All bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and slander must be removed from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.’

Ephesians 4:31-32

We need to be full of forgiveness in grace and truth as those who have being forgiven much.

‘Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.’

Colossians 3:13

5. We need to love as God has loved us

“I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-35

We need to love one another for Christ's sake. *'Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.'* 1 Peter 4:8

6. We need the fruit of the Spirit and the love of God that come from obedience if we are to honour God

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.'
Galatians 5:22-23

7. Our life in Christ means His life is working in us to do and to will for His pleasure. If no concern for His body, maybe no attachment to Him.

'For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf.'
2 Corinthians 5:14-15

8. We need to live as those who are one body in Christ

'Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.'
Ephesians 4:1-6

'Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.'

'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh.'
Romans 13:14

"Let us learn to be patient, not only when any wrong is done to us, but also when we see our neighbours weak and feeble, and not yet come to such perfection as is requisite. And though they are not so much advanced and established in God's Word (as we would wish) yet let us pity them, and with all meekness endeavour to use such correction towards them that neither their vices may be nourished, nor the persons themselves be thrown into despair." John Calvin. Sermon on Ephesians 4:1-5. The year 1559

Compiled by Robert May www.cometothestream.com