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# The Mentality of Peace

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“... God is not the author of confusion, but of peace ...” (I Cor. 14:33). When all the activities of earth are reduced to their lowest common denominator, we find that only two forces have been at work. One force for good and the other for evil. Sometimes evil appears to be good for a time and vice versa; but in the final analysis the simple dichotomy, God and Satan, is a valid explanation for life as we know it.

## **Important Contrasts**

The book of James was directed to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion. It is a matter of record that Jewish converts were involved in a serious and long-standing dispute which threatened to destroy the primitive church. The controversy over legalism manifested itself in Antioch (Acts 15:1ff), Jerusalem (Acts 21:20ff), Crete (Titus 1:10), Rome (Rom. 14:1ff), and in virtually every other part of the Mediterranean world. It formed the basis for Paul's letter to the Galatians. It is the background for understanding the opposition to Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth. To grasp this issue properly is to take a giant stride toward a proper understanding of a large segment of New Testament scripture.

The Jewish teachers who traveled the earth attempting to

destroy the work of Paul undoubtedly felt that they were doing God a service. The “debates, envyings, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults” (II Cor. 12:20) which usually accompanied their efforts, however, indicate a different type of wisdom than God employs.

This truth is brought graphically to our attention. After emphasizing the power of a teacher’s influence and, therefore, the strict judgment which all teachers must face, these words are utilized to delineate and describe two types of wisdom:

James 3:13-18

*Earthly Wisdom*  
 bitter envying  
 earthly  
 sensual  
 devilish  
 confusion  
 evil work

*Wisdom From Above*  
 pure  
 peaceable  
 gentle  
 easy to be entreated  
 mercy  
 good fruits  
 no partiality  
 no hypocrisy

The Galatian letter contains the same type of dichotomy:

Galatians 5:19-23

*Works of Flesh*  
 adultery  
 fornication  
 uncleanness  
 lasciviousness  
 idolatry  
 witchcraft  
 hatred  
 variance  
 emulations  
 wrath  
 strife  
 seditions  
 heresies  
 envyings  
 murders  
 drunkenness  
 revellings, and such like

*Fruit of Spirit*  
 love  
 joy  
 peace  
 longsuffering  
 gentleness  
 goodness  
 faith  
 meekness  
 temperance

The Colossian letter teaches:

## Colossians 3:8-14

*Put Off*

anger  
 wrath  
 malice  
 blasphemy  
 filthy communication  
 lying

*Put On*

compassion  
 kindness  
 humbleness  
 meekness  
 longsuffering  
 forbearance  
 forgiveness  
 love

Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16). He spoke these words about false prophets immediately following His teaching about the "Golden Rule." The basic character of religious leaders can be determined by their fruits. Some bushes are noted for their thorns, others for their luscious fruit. Some teachers are known for their bitter anger, others for being easy to be entreated and long-suffering. By their fruits ye shall know them!

God is not the author of confusion; He is the Author of peace. When God created Eden it was a model of peace and tranquility. There was no carnage or confusion, for even the animals ate vegetation (Gen. 1:30). Once the Author of Confusion had done his evil work all of nature was thrown into the agony of turmoil and fear.

It is increasingly obvious that the Author of Confusion has been at work in Christendom.

**Prayer of Jesus for Peace**

The longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible was spoken the night before Calvary. In the agony of that hour He lifted up His voice for Himself and in behalf of His Apostles. Then He said:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me . . . (Jn. 17:20-23).

The importance of this prayer is significant beyond words! When Jesus prayed for us the one thing and the only thing that the Scriptures record is that He wanted us to get along with one another. Those who have the Spirit of Jesus cannot be indifferent to Christian unity! A careful analysis of this prayer indicates a direct association between peace in Christendom and the evangelization of the world. Conversely there is also an undeniable relationship between our division and an unbelieving world. If our love for one another proves that we are disciples of Jesus, our lack of love must prove the opposite!

### Threats to Peace

The unity and harmony of believers is so vital to the very nature of Christianity that anyone who threatens this unity is to be marked and avoided.

Let us consider the Roman letter by way of illustration. As Rome was the political hub of the ancient world it was a melting pot of races, creeds and nationalities. It is not difficult to imagine many tensions in such a city. The Roman, obsessed by his overpowering desire for world domination, was offensive to the philosophical Greek. Thousands of oppressed slaves were on the verge of revolution against their impious masters. The Jews were insensed and highly offended by the idolatry of the pagans. Society was in a seething turmoil with all of the problems of class struggle, discrimination and poverty which have also plagued our modern world.

The church in Rome would naturally have converts from all social and ethnic backgrounds for Christianity is a faith for *all nations* (Rom. 1:5). The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to *everyone* that believeth (Rom. 1:16). Because the fellowship of believers included "all nations," misunderstandings and tensions would naturally arise even within the church. In order to preserve unity and peace the believers were admonished:

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| Rom. 12:4-5 | Though we have many members with differing gifts there is only one body.                   |
| Rom. 12:10  | Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honor preferring one another. |
| Rom. 12:14  | Bless them that persecute you, bless and curse not.  |
| Rom. 12:16  | Be of the same mind one toward another.  |

- Rom. 12:18      If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
- Rom. 13:8        Owe no man anything but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.
- Rom. 13:10      Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
- Rom. 14:1        Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations (that is, not to argue about his opinions).
- Rom. 14:19      Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another.
- Rom. 15:1, 2    We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.
- Rom. 15:5        Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another . . .

The very idea that someone would divide the one body was so utterly out of character with the genius and spirit of a faith for all nations that Paul continued:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned: and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple . . . (Rom. 16:17-18).

## Hersey

Let's just be optimistic and assume that you really want to know what this world is all about. You've read enough history to know that thousands of people have been put to death as "heretics," but you are not certain just who or what a heretic is. If this describes you, shift down into second gear because we are going to slow down and show you what the Bible teaches about heresy.

Our word "heresy" comes from the Greek word *hairesis*, meaning "choosing" or "choice." It is used only nine times in the New Testament Scriptures. The scriptures are listed here for your convenience and the italicized word represents the Greek word for "heresy."

Acts 5:17	“ . . . which is the <i>sect</i> of the Sadducees . . . ”
Acts 15:5	“ . . . certain of the <i>sect</i> of the Pharisees which believed . . . ”
Acts 24:5	“ . . . ringleader of the <i>sect</i> of the Nazarenes . . . ”
Acts 24:14	“ . . . after the way which they call <i>heresy</i> so worship I . . . ”
Acts 26:5	“ . . . after the most straitest <i>sect of our religion</i> I lived a Pharisee . . . ”
Acts 28:22	“ . . . concerning this <i>sect</i> we know that it is everywhere spoken against . . . ”
Gal. 5:20	“ . . . strife, seditions, <i>heresies</i> . . . ”
I Cor. 11:19	“ . . . for there must be also <i>heresies</i> among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you . . . ”
II Pet. 2:1	“ . . . even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable <i>heresies</i> , even denying the Lord that bought them . . . ”

You will note that the translators have not been consistent. Five times they have used the word “sect” and four times “heresy” or “heresies” to translate the same Greek word. The word is not evil in itself for it simply refers to a party, sect or division. It becomes evil, however, when associated with Christianity for the Body of Christian believers must be “one” in order for the world to believe in Jesus. Christians are a “sect” or “heresy” as the word is used in the Book of Acts for we have “chosen” Jesus and are thereby “separated” from unbelieving Jews, pagans, etc. Within the framework of His Body, however, any “heresy” or “sect” is condemned as satanic.

Though we have already made reference to the “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19-21, it will be profitable to review this scripture in greater detail for it provides insight into the way that “heresy” can find its way into the Body of Christ. The road to heresy is “. . . hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies” (Gal. 5:20).

*Step one* on the road to heresy is “hatred.” This is the Greek word *echithra*, also translated as “enmities” in the Bible. This word is used to describe the enmity between Pilate and Herod (Lk. 23:12). It is used to portray the explosive hatred between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-16). Vine in his *Word Studies* describes it as

the "opposite of love." Note: The road to heresy begins with the lack of love!

*Step two* on the road to heresy is "variance." This is the Greek word, *eris*, which is also translated as "strive." It is defined by Thayer (p. 249) as "contention, strife, wrangling." It is translated as "debates" in II Corinthians 12:20. When you do not love someone, it is not too difficult to get into a wrangle or a debate with them over almost anything.

*Step three* on the road to heresy is "emulations." This is the Greek word *zelos* which is also translated as "jealousies." Thayer (p. 271) defines the word in two ways. First of all it is used in a good sense of "zeal, ardor in embracing, pursuing, defending anything." All zeal, however, is not good so the word also means "an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy." When people who do not love one another have had a wrangle or a debate, it is not unusual to find "an envious and contentious rivalry" between them.

*Step four* on the road to heresy is "wrath." It is the Greek word *thumos* which is defined by Thayer (p. 293) as "passion, angry heat, anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again." This word emphasizes a "sudden burst of anger" as opposed to the word "orga" which means indignation which arises gradually. It is translated in Revelation as "glow" or "ardor." When people who do not love one another have fallen into debates and contentious rivalries, it is not unusual to find someone blowing up in a glowing, passionate burst of anger.

*Step five* on the road to heresy is "strife." This is the Greek word *erithia* which is also translated as "factions." This is a very picturesque word which is only used eight times in the New Covenant Scriptures. Aristotle used the word to represent those "who electioneer for office, courting popular applause by trickery and low arts." The word is derived from "erithos" which means "working for hire, a hireling." Thayer (p. 249) states that the word is used in the New Testament as a "courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts." When people who do not love one another have been through a contentious battle, and when someone has erupted in a glowing and passionate burst of anger, it is not unusual to find them seeking to further their views through a low and dirty campaign. Dirty politics in the church is only one step removed from heresy.

*Step six* on the road to heresy is "seditions." This is the Greek

word *dichostasia* which is also translated as “divisions.” It is defined by Thayer (p. 153) “to stand apart, dissension, division.” After a church gets involved in dirty politics, divisions soon appear.

At last we have arrived at *heresy, which means “choosing” or “choice.”* Once divisions start to appear many people feel compelled to “choose up sides” and that is what heresy is all about.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” Is it possible that heresies can be healthy for the Body of Christ? This seems to be exactly what the Scriptures teach. God has provided a way for poison to be extracted from the human body, and He has also provided a way for poison to work its way out of the Body of Christ. The “approved” will always cling to Christ. No amount of pressure can force them into a faction or divide their loyalty to Jesus. Those who do not possess such love for the Master will find it natural to express their carnal nature in support of some tangent. Perhaps some of you who read these words are already well on your way down the road to heresy. Your lack of love has led to several clashes already, and your pride has all but hidden Christ from view.

Remember that those who engineer divisions are sensual and void of the Spirit (Jude 19). Do not forget that the Lord hates the one who sows discord among brethren (Prov. 6:19). Forget all of your allegiance to friends and factions and cling only to Jesus. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1).

### **Questions for Discussion — Lesson 7**

1. List areas of confusion in our modern church and in the world and analyze what caused these.
2. What threatened to destroy the unity of the First Century Church?
3. What threatens to destroy the unity of our own?
4. Does Jesus want His Church divided into denominations?
5. How would Paul’s inspired advice to the Romans help your church?
6. Is all heresy bad?
7. How can love help prevent heresy?