

## GOD'S LITTLE HELPERS

*"...Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him."*

1 Corinthians 8:1-3 (KJV)

The Apostle Paul is beginning an important instruction to the Corinthian church regarding relationships within the Body of believers. In the process of doing so, he includes an all important principle, **love**, as the vital characteristic of the correcting person as well as the spirit in which something is shared. This principle is, love will accomplish things that knowledge alone will not do.

To these Corinthians, idolatry was a serious problem and of a great concern to Paul. Though a major problem with these new Christians, it was only one among several issues that perplexed the leadership of this church. But in this section of his letter, he speaks to the problem of idols. Idols were things that controlled peoples' lives and dictated much of their conduct. They were focal points and distractions to the lives of these young believers. Following these forms of idol worship drew them away from growth and development as new believers in Christ.

However, Paul appears to have two problems to deal with. He not only had to instruct these new believers regarding their idolatrous practices, but he had to deal with the attitudes of other more mature Christians. These mature Christians were not responding very effectively with other (younger) Christians. Giving guidance to those who are young in the Lord is important, but it is vital that what we do say is saturated with love and grace.

In the Church today, we still have problems with idols. They may not be in shrines or high places, but they do create distractions and order peoples' lives today as the physical shrines of worship did in Paul's day. Our challenge is the same; to give leadership to those who are new to the faith. The greater challenge is, for us who claim maturity in the faith to allow the Holy Spirit to do His job independent of our personal assistance.

To those who cannot seem to allow the Holy Spirit to guide and impart true ministry through their efforts, I call these people, *"God's little helpers"*. They usually know the Word and are relatively well-versed in it. But, they are generally filled with a level of pride that motivates a quickness to correct people with their knowledge, rather than with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

There is a place for correction and instruction, however, but that place has to be made **"both"** in the heart of the hearer and the heart of the one motivated to bring correction. Our challenge is to always be led by the Spirit and ensure that our words are *"...seasoned with grace to the hearers."*

Knowledge can fill our hearts with pride and motivate us to correction in a condemning way. Love, on the other hand, reaches out and uplifts; and that to the glory of God not the satisfaction of the helper. Love encourages and redirects ones focus away from idols (any thing that controls our lives) to the real Object of praise, Jesus Christ.

Let us allow the basis for acquired knowledge to be our love for God and others. That love is what motivates us to be an uplift to others we worship with. Our words are important, they are often vital to the success of new Christians and their growth in Christ. We must ensure that our words always point new Christians to Jesus and not to us or our firmly held belief system.