

HARMONIOUS LIVING

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful."

Colossians 3:12-15

In the twelfth verse as just read we heard the five great attributes of man; compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience. Another word for lowliness might be humbleness and another word for meekness might be gentleness. Certainly we cannot dispute the wisdom of these words in describing the behavior of a perfect man and, if we add love, everything will be bound together in perfect harmony.

In the study of psychology we find demonstrated the absolute necessity of an accepting attitude if behavior is to be changed. Indeed, psychology has gone one step further and demonstrated to us that an accepting attitude follows easily when one has come to understand the reasons for a person's behavior. How many times have you stood in judgment of a person rather than to look for the reason lying behind a person's behavior. How much acceptance do you demonstrate in your daily living? How nearly does your behavior measure up to the description of a perfect man?

In virtually every contact made by Jesus, He demonstrated that He took a person as he was. He accepted, not because of what a person did, but because of what he was. He reached out with the kind of acceptance that demonstrated He understood what was going on in the individual's life. He cared and, as a result, a change often took place.

The greatest obstacle to change comes from the anxiety which normally accompanies any change. People need an atmosphere of security to learn; an atmosphere in which anxiety is allayed. That is why, in a group such as our Eastern Star, we find supportive fellowship and we are able to come forth with new ideas and changes in our individual behavior because of it. We know that differences of opinion are inevitable but with the broad mantle of love thrown around us, and with the attitude of acceptance, these differences are no longer stumbling blocks but building blocks.

We may not be able to forget what happens in our relationships with our fellow men, but we can forgive. We will make allowances for our neighbors and demand of them no more than we expect of ourselves. We forgive them out of the spirit of thankfulness we feel toward God, as a reflection of our gratitude for God's graciousness and love toward us. For growth in understanding and patience, we must first be thankful.

Our ritual work teaches us that obedience to God's will must come first and foremost in our lives. No individual can be happy with himself if first he does not reconcile himself to preferring God's will to his own.

Next, our teachings demonstrate the importance of friendship. We know that we must first be worthy of being a friend and then we must take the effort to establish a friendship -- show others that we do care.

Finally, I would suggest that wisdom and justice are the foundations of harmonious living among men of all stations of life. In public, as well as in private life, the wiseness and justice of the actions taken by the individual citizen is crucial. You cannot have a good man who acts foolishly and unjustly and you cannot have a good government unless the citizens are upright, just and wise.

It is always easy to live the best life for a short time or to rise to the occasion for special events, but the real test comes in the everyday routine affairs. "Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart." Galatians 6:9

"If there is righteousness in the heart,
There will be beauty in the character.
If there is beauty in the character,
There will be harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home,
There will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation,
There will be peace in the world."

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