

The Gospel Herald

“As the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21)

For The LORD’S PILGRIMS, STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS
by
Donald E. Martin, Sr.

*“A time to embrace, and a time to
refrain from embracing”*

(Eccl. 3:4)

Dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, as I awoke from a night of rest, after two days of travel and being in meetings, I arose with the words of a dear brother on my mind. As God has given occasion, my dear brother in Christ, whom I esteem and visit with frequently, we were given the opportunity, once again, to travel to South Georgia to visit the little flock which gathered at the meeting house where Empire Church gathers for their Saturday, before meeting.

As we arrived at the meeting house, the dear pastor of the assembly greeted us and expressed, that he awoke that morning thinking about my visitation may be evident on this day. I was blessed to think our Lord would have given one a mind to desire the fellowship of one such as I. As I approached the door of the meeting house where the dear brother stood, we greeted one another with extended hands and a FIRM and LOVING EMBRACE.

I, by nature am not a “touchy, lovey” person; yet, God has caused me to be blessed when brethren express to me a kind and loving demeanor which bears witness of a genuine love, which I discern to be of Christ, and embrace me with a STRONG and MEANINGFUL EMBRACE. It is as if you have been away on a journey for a long season and you have returned home to those whom you love dearly. Although this assembly is where my former membership was held, the union of brethren united by Christ’s divine love

is the same love which can be experienced everywhere God's people assemble.

As you brethren know, this endearing witness one with another is not always as warm and meaningful by all of who would take the liberty to EMBRACE another. Often it is as if it is a mere formality or tradition without "genuine gladness" felt in the heart from those in this special bond of "brotherly love." As we read Paul's admonition to "greet one another with a "holy kiss," we in our society are not accustomed to kissing one another as men. As it would most likely be looked upon as strange and effeminate, Yet, if you notice the culture of Israel and the East Asian people, they do greet one another with a kiss (which is a custom revealed in the scriptures).

As I have traveled around about over the years, meeting at various places among those who profess a hope and love for Christ, I find often there are folks who do not extend themselves to a "love of the brethren" embrace but are reserved and distant. I often think in my mind, do these truly love the gathering of the brethren? Yet, I find myself trying to fit others in my specific mold of heartfelt expression. God MUST move a brother to desire a strong embrace of those of kindred Spirit. For to do less would merely be a formality and tradition. Are you truly happy to see the brethren when you gather with them? Have you longed for their personal fellowship in the common faith of Christ and esteem them to a level much greater than yourself? Then, may God cause us to not be reserved in our expression of Christ's implanted love, but show it in genuine expression of a "kind embrace" rather than with a mere "religious handshake."

This dear Brother, pastor of whom I speak, knows not that "HE MADE MY DAY" by his kind remarks and warm embrace. This expression was to me (a humble sinner poor and needy of our Saviour's love and salvation), an example of Christ's love, as discerned by my spirit. Oh! Dear brethren, this made the distant travel an added blessing when brethren come together in the unity of the faith, with expressions of heartfelt love one for another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you"

(John 15:12).

“These things I command you, that ye love one another”

(John 15:17).

May the “individualism” of our society be broken down that in these last days; our love one for another in the bonds of Christ’s divine love might be known and demonstrated by all who name the name of Christ as Saviour, Lord and master. One of the greatest curses upon a society is the “individual stance” and neglect to show them whom God has given you that you genuinely love them, whether it be wife, son, daughter, or Brethren and Sisters in the Church of Jesus Christ. May our love be manifested by outward expression and not merely by WORD ONLY.

Reserved coldness and distant expressions ought not be among the household of God’s heritage. Holy Spirit’s love WILL manifest itself with a longing to be in the fellowship and presence of those whom we have been given a hope that we shall spend eternity together, FREE from these fleshly mortal frames, which often attempt to beset us with coldness and distant attitudes. These things should not be named among those who are of the True Vine. “For by their fruit ye shall know them.”

May the God of ALL grace bless us to look forward to, and long for, the sweetness of the love of the brethren as it is demonstrated by the power of God’s Holy Spirit through Christ Jesus, of whom we have to do.

Respectfully Submitted, in humble bonds of divine love,

November 23, 2009