

I sometimes have to chuckle, either that or cry, at how fast, how easy it is to have agreements, understandings and, of course, the obligatory, "Oh, yah! Of course we'll do things that way," go awry. Lectures, scolding and repeated hands-on demonstrations to the Great Grandchildren on keeping the gates closed so the dogs don't get out are soon forgotten. When attentions are turned elsewhere, the fun of the moment, the excitement of attaining a goal and just the absolute need to eliminate this stupid obstacle of a gate out of their life's equation of the moment, causes the repeated sight our dogs wondering the neighbor's yard. I have purposefully chosen an example involving children as the same thing does happen with adults only with deeper twists and turns to their logic of ignoring, forgetting, agreements.

The Apostle Paul had a similar experience with his ministry. Several times he found himself having to re-explain and/or even re-establish the very things he preached in a congregation's beginning. We are fortunate in that we now have his writings to guide us. Let us look at his letter to the Corinthians the eleventh chapter. He starts out by saying in verse 1,

"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. (2) Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you."

Paul then had to address a failing. Starting in verse 17,

"But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you."

The problem that Paul addresses was not the act of open rebellion or planned dissent but rather the result of a slow drift into a pattern of doing things with unintended consequences. It just happened that the "fun" and camaraderie caused an "IN" and an "OUT" situation. When complaints happened they most likely were dismissed with the thought, "Well. There's nothing stopping you from doing the same thing. If you want to be like us then work at it and be like us." That is not how a body works.

We do have examples of open rebellion and planned dissent in our own immediate and short history of our country, The United States of America. First with a Declaration of Independence from an oppressive Overlord government. This Declaration of Independence stated,

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men..."

We also have the further example of some who saw independence as permission to act and do as they saw fit without regard for their fellow man, fellow citizens. Arguing that forcing people's labor without paying a living wage was the only way to ensure wealth, and the prosperity of the country. They considered slavery as God given and God blessed for their faithfulness. Complaints were dismissed as jealousy and laziness for not doing it themselves. But when Abraham Lincoln won the Presidency (winning the Electoral College but only 39%

of the popular vote having votes split over a wide field of candidates) these "Confederate" minded people openly rebelled with planned dissent.

Fortunately people, who also saw themselves as Godly for opposing slavery, reacted in word and deed. Julia Ward Howe wrote a poem that was set to a Southern tune that became The Battle Hymn of the Republic:

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword; His truth is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never sound retreat; He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat. Oh be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant my feet! Our God is marching on."

Oh, how happy we are! We few, we happy few, have the ability to come together in Christ's name and partake of the supper that the Lord Himself instituted for us. We are not caught up in open rebellion as most find themselves where the Lord's Supper is dismissed outright and/or planned dissent where it is relegated to the province of the "Clergy" with occasional "Lay" participation. How does one rectify in their mind, or justify saying, that the Lord's Supper "gets in the way of the Spirit of the worship service?"

Let us relish the words Paul continued on with to the Corinthians in chapter 11 verses 23 - 26,

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ' This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Let us know now that we are in communion with the Lord and all the Saints forever as we partake in this loaf and cup. It is our honor. It is our privilege.

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