

"CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER"

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Hebrews 10:24.

The Epistle to the Hebrews lays deep the doctrine of better promises in Christ and stresses strongly the duty of better living on the part of Christians.

The "therefore" of verse nineteen is one of both doctrine and duty -- the gracious doctrine of scriptural privilege and the glorious duty of Christian responsibility. This duty is expressed in the rapidfire exhortations "Let us draw near," which is a call to continual faithfulness, and "Let us consider," which is a call to mutual thoughtfulness.

We have the Christian privilege of access to God through Christ. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." The Christian has the privilege of coming into the immediate presence of God. He can freely, boldly and confidently go directly to God for himself. We are exhorted to do what we are privileged to do, namely, draw near to God. We must come with true hearts and in full faith, cleansed on the inside and on the outside. We cannot come into God's presence with unclean hearts and hands.

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. The privilege is right of access unto God, the duty is that of approach. No man values the right of access who does not desire to approach. Nothing really satisfies the heart of man in being told that he is at liberty to approach God, if he does not have an inclination to approach Him. We draw near to God when we engage properly in the solemn exercises of private devotion and public worship.

We are exhorted to "hold fast our faith without wavering." We are exhorted also to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." We must not be selfish in our Christian privilege. Spirituality and selfishness do not go together.

"Let us consider one another." What a splendid suggestion! Today, especially, it is a transforming idea. We live in a world where it is the fashion to think of ourselves most of the time, of our own families now and then, of the things of God all too seldom, and of others scarcely at all. It is timely, then, for us to be called and challenged to "consider one another."

As followers of Christ we are urged to make a decision regarding a habit of life in our attitude toward others. "Let us consider one another!" Simple words! Yet splendid! And searching!

These inspired words, "consider one another," call us to:

I. A Greater Thoughtfulness.

This word "consider" speaks of attention, consideration, care and thoughtfulness. Dr. William Barclay suggests the meaning, "Let us put our minds to the task of taking thought for others; that is to say, Let us remember that we are Christians, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of others. It is easy to drift into a kind of selfish Christianity, but a selfish Christianity is a contradiction in terms."

Thoughtfulness is a vital characteristic of the Christian life. It is interesting, therefore, to compare some of the various things that are listed for consideration in the Bible. Moses urged his people to ponder the end of life: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end" (Deuteronomy 32:29). Samuel desired them to remember the blessings of God. He said, "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things

He hath done for you" (I Samuel 12:24). Haggai challenged his listeners to think upon the folly of sin: "Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways" (Haggai 1:5). The writer to the Hebrews suggests that we consider the greatest of all themes -- the adequacy of Christ: "For consider him that endureth such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:3). There are so many important things to occupy the mind of a thoughtful man or woman.

II. A Greater Thankfulness.

"Let us consider one another" is an exhortation which directs our minds to I Corinthians 13:4-8. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."

Of all people who have ever lived, Christ alone personifies love perfectly. In coming, in living and in dying He truly "pleased not Himself" because He continually considered others. Our thankfulness, therefore, is, first of all, for Him. He perfectly exemplified our text. He challenges us, who are His followers, to make its message our own. By His indwelling presence He gives us the ability to obey it. Thank God for our wonderful Saviour and Lord. He wants us to consider one another. He asks us to consider one another. He teaches us to consider one another. He enables us to consider one another. Praise Him for that fact.

Genuine thankfulness always issues in united worship. Let us thank God for the glorious opportunity of mutual consideration and edification in worshipping with one another.

III. A Greater Prayerfulness.

These words convict us. We are uneasy because our self-centeredness has been discovered. Our text says, "Let us consider one another." But our thoughts, as a rule, are not upon others. Their problems, their needs and their longings do not touch us. Only occasionally do we allow them, our fellow Christians, to become our consideration. And even then the concern aroused soon fades because we consider ourselves -- our health, peace, comfort, etc. We consider our families and their welfare some. But the Christian life brings us into the great broad sweep of humanity.

We see our need. There is a great lack in our lives. We know that J-O-Y spells joy. J comes first and stands for Jesus; O, for Others, second; Y, for yourself, last. This joy can and should be ours. We are stirred to pray, fervently and faithfully, in the words of that lovely song:

"Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayer will be for others."

We are challenged to pray because we discover that without God's help we are quite unable to "consider one another." Let us pray for deliverance from self in order that both God and others may be considered by us.

"Let 'self' be crucified and slain
And buried deep. And all in vain
May efforts be to rise again
Unless to live for others."

When we begin to consider others, we are stirred to pray for them too. This is an undeniable experience of the Christian life. The discovery of another's need leads, not to criticism, but to prayer. The opportunity to help a fellow believer brings not only action, but intercession also.

IV. A Greater Helpfulness.

Charles Kingsley said, "We believe like God only as we become of use." We say that we love Christ, and He tells us that we should show our devotion to Him in kindness to His friends. Then He puts Himself before us to be served and helped personally, as it were, in every needy and suffering person who comes to us. Our Lord said, "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:35-40).

There is something inexpressibly beautiful in the revelation which these words of our Lord bring to our hearts. Christ Himself is ever standing before us, appealing to us for love, for sympathy and for ministry. Even in the lowliest of those who are about us Christ Jesus Himself waits for our loving service.

When one comes to the Saviour for pardon and cleansing, and abides in peace under the light of His countenance, the result will be thoughts of love and acts of kindness. Children of God should have a personal interest in others. Christians ought to have a tender consideration and concern for one another. They should have a special interest in the well-being and progress in the ways of the Lord of those who are united with us in the Christian fellowship.

The purpose of our consideration of one another is "to provoke unto love and good works." Some might say, "That is strange language for anybody to use in writing to Christians." It is, if it turns our thoughts to the kind of considering that pinpoints the fears, faults or failings of others; if it means that merciless criticism and useless accusing that all too often provokes unhappiness and unrest among Christians. But the verse says, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." It urges us to take into account one another's circumstances, temptations, weaknesses, and hopes, not for the purpose of criticizing but of encouraging and calling forth the best; not that others might be hindered, but helped by us.

A well-known true story illustrates how such usefulness in Christ's service becomes possible, in a very practical way. An American in China some years ago was very interested in the children who played in the streets, for many of them were carrying smaller children on their backs. "It is too bad," he said sympathetically to one little fellow, "that you have to carry such a heavy burden." "He is not a burden," was the quick reply, "he is my brother."

Later, after returning to his home in America, that traveller told his family of the incident. He remarked, "A little Chinese boy has taught me the fullest meaning of the words, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.' If a Chinese lad can carry and care for his brother like that and yet not consider him a burden, surely we ought not to think it a burden to carry our small brothers, the weak and needy ones who look to us for help." Such usefulness brings its own reward. As J. M. Barrie wrote, "Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."

"Up and be doing" is the word that comes from God for each of us. Let us so incarnate the Christian spirit in our lives that our conduct will cause others to want to live the kind of life they see exemplified in us. Let us perform the kind of works which will honor our Lord and help our fellowmen during our lifetime, and then we shall leave behind us that which shall not be lost when we have passed from this scene of action. Do something worthwhile. Is there not some want, some suffering or some sorrow that you can relieve? Isn't there some act of neglected duty, some deed of cheerful kindness that you can perform? Is there not some love and appreciation to be rendered to those to whom they have long been due? Is not there some humble, kind and useful deed by which you can promote the glory of God and good will among men? If there be any such deed, in Christ's name, go and do it.

"As we meet and touch, each day,
The many travellers on our way,
Let every such brief contact be
A glorious, helpful ministry;
The contact of the soil and seed:
Each giving to the other's need,
Each helping on the other's best,
And blessing, each -- as well as blest."