

CLERGY & LAITY

David Halbrook

Do you belong to the clergy or laity? To which did Paul and Timothy belong? Did they wear special robes, garments, or titles (“Reverend, Holy Father, Father, Archbishop,” etc.)? Jesus rebuked such distinctions, saying “They love... to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven” (Matt. 23:6-10).

In Scripture, leaders in the churches of Christ were not given any religious titles or clothing (special robes, collars, etc), not even the apostles! Compare 1 Timothy 1:1 and 1 Peter 1:1 with the way modern religious leaders identify themselves.

Man invented the clergy-laity distinction, thus human authorities define the clergy, deciding that a certain education or human recommendation is essential. Ask your preacher to show from the Bible who is qualified to be “Reverend” or “Archbishop.” God appointed leaders in each congregation, but they were known by their God-given work, not their title or dress. God does not elevate men by rank or title for “you are all brethren.”

-- *Editor’s Note:* Paul spoke of the simplicity that is in Christ and when His way is compared to modern religious organization, His simplicity is most obvious. To help others see this, find, clip, and distribute our *Arkansas Weekly* article.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

June 24, 2012

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THE MAN WHO ISOLATES HIMSELF

Joe Price (The Spirit’s Sword; June 10, 2012)

Human beings are social creatures. This is evident from the Edenic scene in which God said “It is not good that man should be alone” and so made woman and brought her to the man (Gen. 2:18-25). In marriage there is a companionship that mirrors that of Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-33).

Christians compose “one body”, which is the church of Christ (Eph. 1:22; 4:4). As the body of Christ the church has many members (individual Christians, Acts 2:47). Each member of Christ’s body has a different function that benefits the rest of the body. See this confirmed in Romans 12:4-5:

4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Christ did not save us so that we would then isolate ourselves from one another. Early Christians continued in fellowship (Acts 2:42). Christians are “members of one another” (Rom. 12:5). We need and benefit from each other’s gifts, love and sympathetic care (Rom. 12:6-16). The Christian who isolates himself from faithful brethren fails to help his fellow Christians in their time of need. Additionally, he fails to receive the help that others can provide him. The body of Christ is to be “joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share...” (Eph. 4:16). Truth, love, thankfulness and the peace of God are among the “joints and ligaments” which hold us together in one body (Col. 2:19; 3:14-15). Christians who isolate themselves from their brethren will neither be strengthened by nor strengthen other Christians.

Numerous advantages are to be gained by the companionship of faithful friends and brethren. Some of the benefits of a brotherly bond are enumerated in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:

9 “Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor.
10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is
alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie
down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? 12
Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a
threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

1) *Companionship in Christ means shared work and shared success (Eccl. 4:9).*

When Christians work together great things are accomplished for Christ (2 Ths. 1:3-4). The anticipated joy of glory prompts us to “eagerly wait for the Savior”, not on an island of solitude but as glad participants in life’s race and its eternal reward (Heb. 12:1-2). Each Christ shares in the great work of Christ, contributing his or her part to its success. Whether it is by service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, showing mercy or some other worthy effort of a disciple, working together lightens our load and increases our joy (Rom. 12:4-8). Be sure you are doing your part as a member of the body of Christ. Don’t isolate yourself from your companions in the faith.

2) *Companionship in Christ gives protection from spiritual danger (Eccl. 4:10).*

The apostle of Christ warned, “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). We all need and benefit from the protection of our fellows who watch out for our spiritual welfare and who raise a word of warning when danger is near. We value early warning systems that alert cities, towns and villages when severe weather approaches. Millions of dollars are spent annually in this country on the forecasting and warning of hurricanes, tornadoes and other severe weather events. The need is obvious, and such warnings save lives. How much more valuable ought it to be when our soul is in jeopardy and one who loves us warns us of sin’s danger and death?

19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (Jas. 5:19-20)

3) *Companionship in Christ gives security from spiritual danger (Eccl. 4:11).*

Christians have a common enemy – the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). Surely we are not ignorant of his devices, including his age old attempt to divide and conquer (2 Cor. 2:11). He injects evil thoughts toward brethren into the hearts of those more interested in self-justification and personal advancement than in “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). The security of unity in Christ is disrupted as trust wanes and suspicion increases. Satan knows when Christians stand united in

truth they are a powerful force to advance the gospel and to withstand his destructive ploys (Jno. 17:21-23). The Christian who isolates himself from his brethren is exposed; his spiritual defenses are weakened and he is vulnerable to attack. Seek out the companionship of faithful brethren for the sake of your spiritual security. And, be a source of refuge for a Christian in peril.

4) *Companionship in Christ gives strength against spiritual danger (Eccl. 4:12).*

Just as a threefold cord is not easily broken, the strength of faithful Christians standing side by side to withstand the wiles of the devil together is potent (Eph. 6:10-13). To choose to be isolated from your brethren denies for yourself the comfort and strength of building up each other: “Therefore, comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Ths. 5:11).

Solomon wisely observed, “A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against wise judgment” (Prov. 18:1). Having obtained “like precious faith”, let us not seek our own desire. Let us rather join together in the strength of faith and unity in Christ that conquers every spiritual foe. Christians are not islands; “we are members of one another” (Eph. 4:25).

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SOBER-MINDED IN EVERY SENSE OF THE TERM

David Diestelkamp

Researchers at the University of California San Diego reviewed 14 years of accident data and found that “A blood alcohol concentration of just 0.01 percent was associated with risky behaviors such as speeding.” Lead researcher, David P. Phillips, Ph.D. says, “For a 180 pound person, that translates to one glass of wine or a bottle of beer.” (Better Homes And Gardens, November 2011, pg 184).

Even some people of the world are beginning to admit that for the person who doesn’t want to make bad decisions that lead to “risky behaviors,” even one drink is too much. As Christians, we have been taught by God’s grace that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age...” (Titus 1:11-12). We are committed to making decisions that are pleasing to God in all things and we therefore reject anything that clouds thinking or encourages risky behavior.

The world wants us to be wise drivers. After even one drink we are not fit to drive home. Impaired thinking will not get us to an eternal home of glory either. Be wise. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1).

(Think On These Things, Apr-June 2012)