

MUTUAL LOVE AND CONFIDENCE

These are difficult times in many ways, and those difficulties tend to sharpen edges and make relationships more brittle in nature. There is no question that the Enemy will take advantage of such conditions to work his own type of mischief.

William Gurnall reminds us of a scene from the Book of Acts that reflects this work of the Enemy, and with it he offers some encouraging advice.

The gospel, that makes wolves and lambs agree, does not teach the lambs to turn (into) wolves and devour each other.

No, when any such embers of contention begin to smoke among Christians, we may know who lit the spark—no other but Satan; he is the great kindle-coal of all their contentions. If there be a tempest, not in the air, but in the spirits of Christians, and the wind of their passions be high and loud, it is easy to tell who is the conjurer. O, it is the devil, who is practicing his black art upon their (emotions), which yet are so much unmortified as gives him too great an advantage of raising many times sad storms of division and strife amongst them. Paul and Barnabas set out in a calm together, but the devil sends a storm after them—such a storm as parted them in the midst of their voyage: 'And the contention was so sharp betwixt them, that they departed asunder one from the other.' (Acts 15:39)

There is nothing, next (to) Christ and heaven, that the devil grudge(s) believers more(of) than their peace and mutual love. If he cannot rend them from Christ, stop them from getting heaven, yet he takes some pleasure to see them go thither in a storm; like a shattered fleet severed one from another, that they may have no assistance from, nor comfort of, each other's company all the way; though, where he can divide he hopes to ruin also, well knowing this to be the most probable means to effect it.

One ship is easier taken than a squadron. A town, if it can be but set on fire, the enemy may hope to take it with more ease; let it therefore be your

great care to keep the devil's spark from your powder.

Certainly, peace among Christians is no small mercy, (because) the devil's arrows fly so thick at its breast. Something I would fain speak to endear this mercy to the people of God; for. I love, I confess, a clear and still air, but, (above all), I love to see it in the church among believers. William Gurnall (Edited)

Mutual love and confidence are the hallmarks of Christian fellowship. By loving one another in Christ, and then by that love enjoying each other's confidence even when we may not see to eye to eye on some issue, we close ranks and shut out the Enemy. Or to use Gurnall's image, we sail in a close convoy, giving him no place to trouble our peace.

This confidence in one another comes from understanding that though we might not agree on this or that, we are all coming from a prayerful and thoughtful position in which we are trying to honor Christ. Trusting this is true of one another, we can then discuss and debate our differences in a humble and respectful manner with Christian deference and civility.

The question is, how do mortals, whose sanctification is still a work in progress, manage this sort of mutual love and confidence?

As this spirit of unity is the gift of God through the Spirit, it needs, first of all, to be a directed, sincere matter of prayer.

And then, we need to admonish our own hearts with this Holy Spirit inspired counsel from the Apostle Paul:

Ephesians 4:1-3 *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

--Pastor G.W. Fisher