

God Among Us

A sermon by Larry Kirkpatrick

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Today, an all too brief look into one text: 2 Corinthians 13:11:

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you

Paul labored with the Corinthian church. Apparently, beside his personal labors in Corinth, he wrote at least three letters to them (2 Corinthians 13:1). In Scripture, we have two of these preserved. At the close of the second (which is apparently the third actual letter), Paul offers a four-fold admonition:

be perfect

be of good comfort

be of one mind

live in peace

We are gathered here today to experience the Lord's Supper. We do not have time or purpose to, on this occasion, develop carefully what Paul has in view when he speaks of perfection. That must await another occasion. But the latter three parts of verse 11 we will consider, if briefly. We should anticipate that they also speak to us somewhat of his meaning for perfection.

Be of Good Comfort

Paul calls believers to be of good comfort. This seems a self-evident goal. Why wouldn't believers in Christ be of good comfort? The Master of the Universe cared for them, came down from heaven for them, took human flesh for them, was pierced for them, and hung up onto the cross for them—so can't they trust Him?

When we fail to trust Christ, we are left with what? Trust in ourselves, in our own maneuverings, machinations, methods, capabilities. And we are not so sure of those. And so, we leap into the fray on our own behalf. We should be trusting in God but revert to trusting in ourselves. Then we begin to get nervous. We find it difficult to be of good comfort because we are trusting only in the comfort that we feel we can ourselves create. No wonder.

Jesus is in control. We can trust Him. We can be of good comfort because Jesus is Lord. You are not Lord, I am not Lord, the president of the United States is not Lord; Jesus is Lord. When I think of that, I am of good comfort. Whatever may come, Jesus, who loved me so much that He took my nails for me, is Lord.

Be of One Mind

The next admonition we have from Paul is that we would be of one mind. That's right. Gather up one or two hundred partially converted people, and expect them, voluntarily, to be of one mind. Let's be honest. If we are all converted, it does not follow that we have all arrived. We are all growing (I hope). I know that I have not fully attained. God still has, I am very sure, a long list of serious points to address with me. He's working on this as fast as He can without crushing me. Perhaps it is much the same with you.

He comes to heal and to give life more abundantly. He does not come to condemn or to destroy. God has a purpose for His church. He would reveal His character through the members of His church. The effectiveness of our witness to those outside the church is inevitably tied to our behavior toward one another within the church. Jesus makes it clear in John 13:25: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Live in Peace

If Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and if it is enough for a disciple to be as his master, and if we are Jesus' disciples, it follows that we will be representatives by our actions of the Prince of Peace. Words are nice but in the end they are just nice. Actions are the essence of persuasive power.

How do we put this into concrete form? Counsel with each other. Appoint spiritual leadership. Let a collective decision stand and move on. We addressed some of this in the last message, and will not add further labor here.

As much as possible, we are to live in peace with all men. As much as possible is a great deal, when we recognize that it is left up to us. In God's strength all things are possible, and that would include doing our part to live in peace with all men. Is Jesus our Prince? Is He really? Then we are representatives of the Prince of Peace.

Conclusion

We see all these in this little verse. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace. All these behaviors fit most strikingly any and every church family in these last days that wishes to find its way home. We want to see Jesus. Yes, and so do our neighbors. If they see in us these attitudes and behaviors, they cannot help but get the clue that we have been with Jesus. There is not where we end, but where we start.

So let's start.

Biographical note: Larry Kirkpatrick has served in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1994. He is a pastor of the American West, having led churches in Nevada, Utah, California, and Idaho. His writings include the books *Real Grace for Real People*, and *Cleanse and Close*. Larry and wife Pamela presently serve in the Upper Columbia Conference, ministering to the [Bonners Ferry](#) and Clark Fork churches in the incomparable beauty of Northern Idaho.