

George Muller Sermons

Chapter 6 - An Address at the Clifton Conference, October, 1863. Part 1

My object in coming here was only to manifest the full sympathy I feel with the purpose of the meeting, without any intention of speaking; but being asked to do so I cannot refrain, for love's sake, from saying a few words.

One point has struck me particularly, as to the Headship of our adorable Lord Jesus. It is the will of that blessed One that His disciples should love one another, and be united together in heart and affection. If it is, then, the will of Him, without whom we must perish eternally, who poured out His soul unto death for our life, and stooped so low that we might share His throne, that we should love one another, and be united as His disciples, does it not become us in love and gratitude to obey?

What are the great hindrances to brotherly love and unity? Self-complacency, high-mindedness, pride, and thinking that we know more than others; but if, by God's grace, we are enabled to subdue these evil tendencies, and to love our fellow-believer, and be united to him, we shall see, perhaps, that if in one thing we have more grace or knowledge than he, yet in four, or five, or ten points he has more than we. Who am I that I should despise my brother? What have I that I have not received? If I have more grace (though that is yet to be questioned), I received it from my Lord. If I have more knowledge (though that is yet questionable), am I indebted for it to my own mind? How does it come? It is by the grace of God that I know more than my fellow-believer.

If we are, then, what we are by the grace of God, so that every particle of power over sin, of heavenly-mindedness, of desire to act according to the Holy Scriptures, becomes ours, because it pleased God, in the riches of His grace, thus to bless us, who are we, that we should look down upon a brother, because there are degrees of ignorance or spiritual weakness in a fellow-disciple? Jesus is our head. It is His will that we should love one another. In gratitude to that blessed One, who laid down His life that I might be saved, let me obey; and if I find pride keeps me from it, let me seek grace to subdue it. We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. When we meet with a weak brother, as to grace or knowledge, our natural tendency is to say, Oh, he is a weak one. The carnal mind says, Put him aside. But the Word of the blessed Lord

says, Bear the infirmities of the weak. If I am strong, let me prove my strength by putting my shoulder to the burden. If I cannot bear with the weakness of my brother it is a plain proof that I am a weak one myself. Why have we received grace? That we may help on our weaker or less instructed brother that in helping others we may bring glory to God.

I think it may not be unprofitable to refer to one thing in my experience. When I began, thirty-four years ago, as a young servant of Christ, to labour in this country in the Word, having just received certain blessed truths as the coming of the Lord, etc. my natural tendency was to look down upon those who did not see them. Thirty-four years have elapsed since then. By God's grace I hold as firmly as ever, and maintain as strongly, those blessed truths; but as to my deportment to other disciples, who do not agree with me in these points, there is a difference now. The mind of the young servant of Christ was to say, Stand aloof! To esteem them as very little instructed. What was the result? Was it peace and joy in the Holy Ghost? Did I imitate Him who bore with the ignorance of His disciples. No; it was anything but imitation of Jesus, and the result was anything but peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. By the help of God I am now, and have been for more than twenty years, of a different mind, without sacrificing one particle of those truths which I received in the year 1829.

My aim now is, to bear with those who may be less instructed; and, in the measure in which I am able to follow the example of my adorable Lord, the result is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. I affectionately and earnestly entreat my dear fellow-believers, especially the young, to ponder this. Pray to be kept from a spirit of high-mindedness. What you have and are, you have and are by the grace of God, and that should lead you to deal tenderly with your fellow-disciples.

It is often said, for the sake of peace and union, we should not be very particular as to certain parts of truth; keep them back, and treat them as matters of no moment. I humbly state that I entirely differ from this view; for I do not see that such union is of a real, lasting, or Scriptural character. If it be truth, it is dear to the heart of Jesus, we are instructed in it by the blessed Spirit, it is found in God's book; it is therefore of great value, and must be esteemed worthy of being carefully and jealously guarded. We are therefore, not at liberty lightly to esteem, undervalue, keep in the background (much less to give up) the truth, even for the sake of union. We have to buy the truth at any cost, but we ought not to sell it at any price, not even for our liberty or life.

Yet, while we hold fast the truth, all the truth which we consider we have been instructed in from the Holy Scriptures, we must ever remember, that it is not the degree of knowledge to which believers have attained which should unite them, but the common spiritual life they have in Jesus; that they are purchased by the blood of Jesus; members of the same family; going to the Father's house-soon to be all there: and by reason of the common life they have, brethren should dwell together in unity. It is the will of the Father, and of that blessed One who laid down His life for us, that we should love one another.

But it may be asked, Is it possible, that differing in this and that, brethren can be united together? They can. In the three orphan houses and six schools under my direction there are sixty teachers and other helpers. These are found belonging to the Church of England, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists of close communion and open communion, Wesleyans of the Conference and of the Free Church parties, and of the so-called Brethren. All these, though from different bodies of saints, are united together in this one object of labour for Christ. During the many years we have been thus engaged, I have never known a jar to take place because of such difference. This does not arise from a sort of latitudinarianism in myself, but because, while holding firmly my own convictions, I have not required uniformity in these labourers. In engaging my helpers, it is indispensable that they belong to the Head, that they hold fast the blessed Son of God. This settled, I never question as to what denomination they belong to. This is not brought forward boastingly, but to magnify the grace of God.

It is often said that things are stated on the platform which there is no possibility of carrying out in practical life. I maintain there must be a possibility of this loving one another, because it is commanded by God; and especially may the beloved brethren in Christ, who have gathered together these saints before me, be assured that there is a possibility of doing everything that is according to the will of God. It must be possible to do that which God has commanded. And let us not think that it is an extraordinary and high degree of attainment for Christians to walk together in love. The least instructed saints should be found willing to love, though they may not agree on every point. "Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule." On many things we are agreed, and walking thus together, holding in our hearts the headship of Jesus, it is certain we shall make progress; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Don't say of anything, I shall never understand this. It is entirely a mistake. As to the things of God, despair of nothing. Never make the basis of union an agreement about particular points of truth. If my brethren differ from me, I must not say, It is a matter of no moment; neither should I say, I shall never know this or that truth, which may not as yet have been revealed to me. Let there be more prayer, more study of the Word, more humility, more acting out what we already know; thus shall we be more united together, not only in love, but in one mind and in one judgment. There will be no difference in heaven. There all are of one mind. Let us aim at the heavenly condition. More patience, more faith, will bring us further on in blessing. May God grant it to this assembly for the sake of Jesus!

www.christbiblechurch.org