

Four Biblical Obligations to Others

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources; Conclusion)

Introduction: Understanding our fellowship:

- A. "Ed Harrell reasoned that the bounds of fellowship were limited by a number of factors, including factiousness, clear and open immorality, a good conscience, and judgments about the clarity of New Testament instruction. Fellowship decisions were sometimes informed by my estimation of the honesty and sincerity of a brother." (Ed Harrell, *The Churches of Christ in the 20th Century*, pages 361-363)
- B. "Fellowship decisions will be made by the individual Christian and by local congregations based on the clear distinction in the scriptures between matters of doctrine and matters of liberty, based on the individual or local congregation's understanding of the scriptures and ability to teach others, and based on their individual judgments about a brother or local church's evident love for truth, honesty, sincerity, ability and willingness to learn, and eagerness to repent. The facts are: teachers have different levels of knowledge and ability to teach, and hearers have different rates of absorption of the word and grow at different paces." (PRB - Fellowship: A New Testament Study)

III. "UPHOLD THE WEAK"

- A. Not those who are physically weak, but who are spiritually weak.
 - 1. Every church has spiritually weak members.
 - a. When first converted, one will be weak while growing.
 - b. There are others who have been members for many years, but who never have grown spiritually - Heb. 5:12-14
- B. The weak are to be supported or upheld.
 - 1. What does it mean to "support?"
 - a. Does not mean to uphold them when they are wrong, or to make excuses for them. This does great harm.
 - 2. Christians who are weak but have had plenty of time to grow and become strong need to be worked.
 - a. First, they need to be taught again the first principles - Heb. 5:12
 - b. Second, they need to be warned to practice what they've heard.
 - c. Third, they need to be put to work.
 - 3. We must make sure they do not stay spiritual babes all of their lives.
 - 4. Christians do not help by simply making excuses to justify laziness or self-indulgence; instead do things that challenge them become strong.
- C. An infant is not left by its parents to feed, clothe, and care for itself; when a person is baptized into Christ, they need teaching from mature members.
 - 1. Matt. 28:18-20 - "Teach ... baptize ... continue to teach"
 - 2. Often it occurs that one is left to himself, he starts to miss services; no one goes and teaches when he falters, left to face the temptations of the world by himself.

- a. Excuse ourselves - "Well, I figured he wouldn't last. He probably wasn't converted in the first place."

D. Rom. 15:1; Phil. 2:4

IV. "BE PATIENT WITH ALL"

- A. Patience - "forbearance, long-suffering; the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy and used of God." (Shepherd)
 1. Connotes forbearance, long-suffering, endurance.
 2. "Patience is a bitter plant, but has sweet fruits." (Spurgeon)
 3. Like the anvil, it breaks many hammers simply by bearing blows.
 4. "A man is a hero not because he is braver than anyone else, but because he is braver for ten minutes longer." (Emerson)
- B. Patience is essential for salvation.
 1. Heb. 10:36, 38, 12:1
 2. We must have patience, not easily discouraged, in helping others in their weakness and trials.
 - a. Patient in warning the unruly; we may not get a person to repent of disorderliness at first, but we must continue to work and pray.
 - b. Patient in comforting the discouraged; people do not always immediately respond to encouragement; it is not always just a matter of saying, "snap out of it," and the problem is solved.
 - c. Patient in helping the weak; people do not immediately go from weakness to strength.
- C. 2Cor. 12:12 - "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."
 1. Paul had miraculous power that we do not have, and he still worked patiently with the Corinthians.

Conclusion:

- A. You have a commandment to keep that is no less binding than baptism, communing at the Lord's Table, etc. How well are you keeping it?
- B. What have you done recently to:
 1. Warn the unruly,
 2. Comfort the fearful,
 3. Support the weak,
 4. Exercise patience toward all?
- C. "Too busy" "That's the preacher and elders' job." I believe that your future holds either repentance or perdition. I pray you will make the right choice.