

## **NOT HOLDING THE HEAD.**

– COLOSSIANS 2:18. –

THE APOSTLE warns us all against a wrong attitude which at all times has more or less threatened the body of Christ, in its larger gatherings as well as in its little handfuls; – he warns us against the danger of looking too much to ourselves or to other men in the Church and not enough toward the Lord, who is indeed "the Head of the Church, which is his body." Some members he represents as taking a head position, forgetful of the fact that "one is the Head of the Church, even Christ," and inclined in consequence of this forgetfulness to think too highly of themselves, to imagine that the whole weight and importance of the Lord's cause devolves upon them, and to assume too much leadership.

The Apostle warns other less prominent members of the Church against a recognition and support of such a wrong position, assuring them that their condescension is extreme, prejudicial to themselves and to the interests they would serve; that the angels, that is the messengers, the representatives of the Church (Rev. 1:20; 2:1) are not to be worshipped, though they are to be highly esteemed in proportion to their faithfulness, good works and humility. He warns other members that such a humiliation as would ignore themselves entirely and cast all the weight and responsibility and influence upon these angels or elders would be improper, would indicate an unfaithfulness to Christ and a failure to rightly appreciate his arrangements.

## **DANGERS IN OPPOSITE EXTREMES.**

Thus, reproving two classes because of taking opposite extremes, the Apostle proceeds to explain that the difficulty with both parties is a failure to hold the Head in proper esteem – Christ, the only true Head of the Church. Whether by exalting ourselves, usurping our

Lord's place in the Church, and ignoring his words and arrangements and being puffed up as his servants, or whether on the other hand quietly submitting to such things and doing reverence to those who usurp the Lord's place in his body, in either case the difficulty is the same – a failure to rightly recognize the true Head.

If we accept the fact that Christ is the Head of the Church, let us rest every argument on that basis; let us not feel for a moment that everything will go to pieces unless we steady the ark – that we are main spokes in the divine program in any little quarter of Zion. (1 Chron. 13:10.) All such self-conceited ideas are traitorous as respects the Captain of our Salvation, for he has told us – and we believe his word – "Without me ye can do nothing." Every member of the body of Christ, whom the Lord has in any sense of the word set in the Church to serve his cause, should realize that he is not at all essential to the development of the divine plan, that it is favor pure and simple that he has been granted a share in connection with it, that his blessings day by day more than compensate any little service and sacrifice he may be able to render. So far from feeling heady he should feel humbled by the thought that he is permitted to have any part in the great plan of God as a servant amongst his brethren, and he should realize distinctly that, so surely as the Lord is the Head of his Church, any who cease to occupy positions of trust in a humble manner will be debased, will lose the privileges and opportunities, perhaps with injury to themselves and to others.

Those humble brothers and sisters who quietly permit a brother to exalt himself amongst them and to speak of the gathering, large or small, as "my Church," "my followers," etc., are not only doing the brother an injury and encouraging him in a wrong course, but they are disloyal to the real Head of the Church. He who submits to such conditions and language demonstrates that he does not properly appreciate "the liberty wherewith Christ makes free" – demonstrates either that he is but a "babe in Christ" or that he has gone to sleep as respects a proper watchfulness for the honor of the Church and of the

Head of the Church. It matters not that such things can be explained away as not having meant anything serious. The fact is that such language and claims indicate that something serious has already taken place, for no truly humble Elder of the Church of Christ, loyal to the Head, would think of speaking of himself as instead of the Head of the Church, nor think of speaking of the Lord's people as his Church.

Such public offenses should be publicly apologized for, otherwise such leaders should be relegated to the back seats. No matter if they had all the oratory imaginable, no matter if none of the others had any talent for public service. The poorest and weakest and most insignificant member of the body is, in the Lord's estimation, better qualified to teach than is one who vaunteth and puffeth up himself and affects to take in the Church the position of the Head. Mark the Apostle's words, "Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." – Col. 2:19.

### **SELF FIRST, GOD SECOND.**

In 2 Timothy 2:3 the Apostle assures us that, In the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents [and higher authority in general], unthankful, unholy...traducers, heady, high-minded...having a form of godliness, but ignoring the power thereof.

This picture certainly fits well to our day throughout nominal Christendom, and it is not strange therefore that something of the same general spirit at times seeks to invade the camp of the saints – the little companies of the consecrated who are striving to be overcomers of the world and its spirit. The fact that the Apostle writes thus forcefully on this question does not prove any lack of sympathy on his part, and assuredly our reference to his words indicate no lack of sympathy on our part. **[R3613 : page 249]** But the trouble is a grievous one and especially injurious to the brethren who may yield

to such headiness: nothing is surer to sap spiritual vitality and to lead us into darkness, both doctrinal and spiritual.

On the contrary the Apostle James warns us against this danger which besets the more talented of the Lord's people. He writes, Be not many of you teachers, brethren, knowing that a man shall receive the stronger testings. (Jas. 3:1.) It is because of our love for the brethren, because of our high esteem for them, and because we appreciate their services and desire that they may be continued in the service of the Lord, not only now but also in the everlasting future, that we feel it necessary to press this point, not personally, not individually, but generally.

We urge upon all whom the Lord hath set in the body, either in a humble position or in a conspicuous place, that the Apostle's words be remembered – that as our Lord humbled himself and was subsequently exalted, it demonstrates a principle at work in the Father's program under which all of his Royal Priesthood must humble themselves if they would in due time be exalted; also the Apostle's concluding argument is, "Humble yourselves, therefore, brethren, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Now is not the proper time for exaltation; to elevate ourselves or others under present conditions is to incur the greater danger of a fall. Hence all who are earnest and of humble heart should both watch and pray lest they enter into temptation along this line, which from the very beginning of the Gospel age has been the most serious stumbling block in the pathway of this class. We remember that it was amongst the apostles themselves that the argument took place as to which would be greatest in the Kingdom. Let us also remember our Lord's words of reproof to them, "Except ye humble yourselves and become as little children ye can in no wise enter into the Kingdom."

### **ONLY THE HUMBLE ARE SAFE**

Thus our Lord marks humility as one of the prime essentials of a place in the Kingdom. And we can see the importance, the reason for

this. To exalt to the glory, honor and immortality of the Kingdom and divine [R3614 : page 249] nature one who had not thoroughly demonstrated his humility of spirit would be to place him in a position where he might become another Satan, another adversary, who in time under one delusion or another might wish to divide the divine honors even beyond the munificence of our heavenly Father's provision for all those who are truly his consecrated ones.

It will not be very long, dear brethren – let us have patience. Let us have faith, too, not be doubters. Much of the endeavor to grasp and wield authority in the Church is at first undertaken with the best of intentions, with the desire to do and be in the highest interests of the Church. In such cases faith is not strong enough to realize how unnecessary we are to the divine plan and how able the Lord is to overrule every incident and circumstance according to the divine will. More faith in the Lord's power to regulate the affairs of the Church will counteract largely the efforts of some of his people to run the Church's interests along lines of their own wisdom and ability. Let us remember that he is able, he is willing, to work all things according to the counsel of his own will. Let us remember that our highest place is lying low, that the greatest mastery is self-mastery, and that whatever success we might have in usurping the place and authority of our Lord and his Word would undoubtedly react unfavorably to us in the end. Hence in self-preservation as well as in the interest of the Church and in honor of the Lord, we need to keep self under. Let us remember the words of the poet and apply them daily:

"O! to be nothing, nothing,  
Painful the humbling may be;  
Yet low in the dust I'd lay me  
That the world my Savior might see.  
Rather be nothing, nothing –  
To him let their voices be raised;  
He is the fountain of blessing,  
Yes, worthy is he to be praised."

Let us keep ever in memory the Apostle's example and words:  
"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord, and ourselves  
your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Cor. 4:5.

