

“Make it Happen” – Encouragement for the Church to Trust in Jesus Alone

Intro: Can you believe that it’s September already?! The steaming hot days of August are gone, the kids are heading back to school, and the steelhead fishing just keeps getting better. It’s also the weekend that we celebrate Labor Day, that annual celebration of the contribution of workers and the work that they have achieved in our society. Americans are probably the only society to come up with a holiday for work. I find it amusing, though, that this Labor Day weekend is the day that we find ourselves wrapping up the book of 2 Corinthians and that this final passage contains no less than 5 imperatives for the church. It is our turn to look at our past and what EBF has been through these past few years, from wounded and broken, to the sight of hope of healing on the horizon, and now to the calling of unity, peace, and love in the body of Christ. It is time to make it happen.

It is time to rejoice in what the Lord has done! It is time to bring ourselves back into line with the gospel of Jesus Christ, mending ourselves by putting everything in its place under Jesus. It is time to step alongside each other and exhort each other in the gospel and encourage each other to see Jesus. It is time to refocus upon Jesus TOGETHER in one purpose and one mind in unity of the gospel. It is time to make peace with each other, forgiving each other as Jesus has forgiven us. Now, this Labor Day, let us set our hearts and eyes toward our Savior and Redeemer together, and because He is with us and for us, let us labor to make it happen.

In 2 Corinthians 13:11-14 we find an abrupt change of tone in Paul’s writing. It’s as if his scribe leans over to him as he speaks and interrupts his thoughts saying, “Mr. Of-Tarsus, I’m running out of scroll, here.” So Paul, not wanting to end this letter on a tone of rebuke, sets before us a set of staccato imperatives to create peace within the church and he blankets these commands with the great promise of God’s presence among us. Let us look at these labors before us within the picture of unity and may we always remember the great promise that Jesus left His disciples before He ascended, “I will always be with you, even to the end of the ages.”

1. Rejoice as the redeemed family of God

a. Repentance leads to joy in relationship with God

i. He is our Redeemer, our Savior

ii. I can rest from my own righteousness and performance

1. “Where peace with God is established, pleasure in God erupts” ~John Ensor

2. Joy and peace come from believing the Gospel (Romans 15:13)

3. Conversation between Christiana and Mr. Great-Heart in John Bunyans’ Pilgrim’s

Progress:

MR. GREAT-HEART: But again, in order to pardon by deed, there must something be paid to God as a price, as well as something prepared to cover us withal. Sin has delivered us up to the just curse of a righteous law: now from this curse we must be justified by way of redemption, a price being paid for the harms we have done; and this is by the blood of your Lord, who came and stood in your place and stead, and died your death for your transgressions: Thus has he ransomed you from your transgressions by blood, and covered your polluted and deformed souls with righteousness, **Rom. 8:34**; for the sake of which, God passes by you and will not hurt you when he comes to judge the world. **Gal. 3:13**.

CHRISTIANA: This is brave! Now I see that there was something to be learned by our being pardoned by word and deed. Good Mercy, let us labor to keep this in mind: and, my children, do you remember it also. But, sir, was not this it that made my good Christian’s burden fall from off his shoulder, and that made him give three leaps for joy?

MR. GREAT-HEART: Yes, it was the belief of this that cut those strings that could not be cut by other means; and it was to give him a proof of the virtue of this, that he was suffered to carry his burden to the cross.

CHRISTIANA: I thought so; for though my heart was lightsome and joyous before, yet it is ten times more lightsome and joyous now. And I am persuaded by what I have felt, though I have felt but little as yet, that if the most burdened man in the world was here, and did see and believe as I now do, it would make his heart the more merry and blithe.

- iii. Joy is made full from realizing Jesus' choice of you and promise to you! It is seeing the Cross, the heart of the grace of God, that leads to exulting joy!
 1. Luke 2:10, angelic pronouncement of "good news of great joy!"
 2. Acts 8:39, the Ethiopian official
 3. The experience of our joy is directly correlated to the comprehension of our complete despair in sin and the powerful and subsequent freedom that Jesus brings.
 - a. Freed slaves rejoice greatly
 - b. Galatians 4:15, "What happened to all your joy?"
 - c. "Let the joyous news be spread, the wicked old with, at last, is dead!"
 - b. Repentance leads to joy in relationship with each other
 - i. Confession and forgiveness leads to reconciliation
 1. Luke 15:10, parable of the lost sheep and lost coin
 - ii. Joy comes from reconciliation and forgiveness
 1. Like a returning son or a long lost friend coming home
2. Bring yourselves inline with the gospel
 - a. To bring back into line, to mend and heal by setting in place
 - b. Used of setting broken bones to heal
 - c. Set things as they should be, in line with the gospel of Jesus, so that you will be healthy and whole.
 - i. Galatians 2:14, living in step with the grace of the gospel
 - ii. 1 John 1
 3. Help each other
 - a. Paraclete – helper, one called alongside to exhort and/or comfort
 - i. Used of the HS in John 14:16, the Spirit of truth, v26, the teaching/reminding HS
 - b. Our role with each other is similar: teach and remind of the Gospel
 - i. Exhort and encourage toward the Gospel of Jesus
 1. Repent of sin and self-righteousness
 2. Trust and rely upon Jesus' work and blood alone for salvation and all change within
 3. Grace, Grace, Grace
 - c. Look to Jesus as we point each other toward Him, i.e. the truth of God (John 14:6)
 4. Stay focused on Jesus TOGETHER
 - a. "Be on one mind"
 - b. Harmonious living by finding our commonality in JESUS, not in race, culture, politics, age, gender, etc.
 - i. New Kingdom, New Race, New Creatures, New citizens, New Family In Jesus!!
 - ii. Break down the barriers that separate us and unite under Jesus
 1. I-You are a child of the King
 2. I-You are a citizen of Heaven
 3. I-You are theocratic in the new Kingdom under the King
 4. I-You are a new race: Christian
 5. I-You are brothers and sisters
 - c. Jesus gives us our purpose and our passion and our life, stay focused in our thoughts upon Jesus and upon His desires and working and plan for His Kingdom
 5. Make peace with each other
 - a. Forgive the repentant!

- i. Forgiveness and peace go hand-in-hand
 - ii. Swallow the debt against you when your brother sins and repents, as many times as he sins against you and repents (Matt 18)
- b. Work toward forgiveness and reconciliation
 - i. Always be reminding and teaching each other of the gospel of grace, where God's forgiveness always flows to the repentant broken heart and our peace w/God has been established as Jesus swallowed our debt upon the torturous cross.
 - ii. Be looking for opportunities to repent of our wrongdoing (repent freely to one another) and for opportunities to forgive a repentant brother or sister
 - iii. Make the peace happen
- c. Look at Jesus and His sacrificial death, powerful resurrection, and His present sovereign reign over all as our power, example, and motivation to make peace with each other
 - i. Matt 18

Romans 12:9-21 for Corresponding Section

Promise of God's Presence:

1. The God of love and peace will be with you
 - a. There is a constant paradoxical tension between God's promise and His commands.
 - b. A tension b/w His unconditional and His conditional promise; probably not solvable.
 - c. We are not working alone or by our own power, but with the very Spirit of God working within us the fruit of love and peace
2. God's Presence Means Different Relationships
 - a. Holy greetings
 - b. Commonality within the global body of Christ
 - i. All the saints (holy ones) greet you
3. God's Fullness Working to Make it Happen (Trinitarian closing)
 - a. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - b. The love of God
 - c. The fellowship of the holy Spirit
 Matt 28:19-20, presence of JC as power/resource for fulfilling great commission
 Hagg 2:4, God's presence give us courage to work

Conclusion:

Let us be encouraged that we do not, nay we cannot, do this work on our own power. In fact, it is only in giving up our own power that we will ever reach our goal of unity and peace among us. It is only in the power and presence of the Triune God among us, the Lord Jesus' grace by the Father's love set upon us and the glorious participation of His Spirit among us that will achieve this great labor. Let us work to make it happen, only finding our commonality and our unity and our power in the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ, remembering all that God has done on His great Labor Day: where our sin met God's wrath in the midst of His love upon the body of our Savior, Jesus Christ. That day, at the cross, was God's Great Labor Day, and you and I can make peace happen in this church because Jesus Christ worked to achieve our peace with God and lives to hold us secure today as our King. To Him be all the glory, all the power, all the ruling, and all the praise from today into eternity.

Questions:

1. How do joy, comfort, mending, unity, and peace relate to each other?
2. How does God's love bring peace, i.e. possibility of visa versa?
 - a. How is the promise of God's presence (love and peace) determined by the actions of the imperatives in v11? (Causal, result, cooperative, etc.)
 - b. What is the strength of the passive imperatives , particularly in their relationship to the presence of God?
3. What is this holy kiss and is it a universal imperative? Have fun with that one! 😊
 - a. What is this "greeting" and see the relationship b/w all the saints and this particular church?
 - b. Who are "all the saints" and is Paul emphasizing the universal unity of the body here?
 - c. What is the relationship of 2 Corinthians to the rest of the churches?
4. Is there a particular emphasis on the Trinity of God here?
 - a. How does grace relate to the Son?
 - i. Why the Son first? This is out of character, it's usually the Father first.
 - ii. Grace of Jesus: How is Jesus gracious to the Corinthians and why is it important to list first right here, after blasting their acceptance of the unrepentant?
 - b. How does love relate to the Father?
 - i. God's love is the originator of Jesus' grace and the Spirit's fellowship?
 - ii. God's love shown in the grace of JC and the fellowship of the HS?
 - c. How does fellowship relate to the HS?
 - i. HS fellowship with us?
 - ii. Fellowship with each other through the HS?
 - iii. Why fellowship here and not some other HS quality?
 - d. What are each of their roles in particular to the Corinthian believers, and circumspectly to us today?