# **Evening Thoughts (Peace?, Unity?, Charity?)**

[April 28, 2020](http://coolspringspbc.org/2020/04/evening-thoughts-peace-unity-charity/)[Evening Thoughts](http://coolspringspbc.org/category/evening-thoughts/)[Philip](http://coolspringspbc.org/author/pnc007/)

### **Peace?, Unity?, Charity?**

During the last month or so, I have picked up the pen on multiple occasions to write some observations and thoughts pertaining to the recent pandemic to encourage God’s people. Every time, I put the pen down with this thought, “The last thing they need right now is something else to read!” If you are like me, you have read multiple reports, seen conflicting data, watching changing narratives, and perhaps wondered, “So, what am I supposed to believe?” Doubtless we can say that watching the bizarre events unfold we felt confused at times, had to shift our thinking at other times, and perhaps even admitted we were wrong at others. Many times during this season I have heard the sentiment, “I never thought I would live to see something like this!”

Kind reader, now that data has become more established, things are beginning to open up, and people are looking with expectation to some sense of normalcy coming soon, something very important for our churches looms before us. If we talked to a dozen of our brethren about this situation, we might likely get a dozen different opinions about things. No two of us likely looked at it all the same. During this strange season, opinions were formed and expressed, and at times, those positions were firm and adamant. Maybe you expressed it to others, or maybe you kept it to yourself. Either way, times are before us when we will be around brethren we haven’t seen in some extended days, and people will likely talk about the situation with each other when they are back together. Frankly, I have heard all the COVID-19 talk to last me 3 lifetimes, but it is a natural tendency for people to talk about current events. What will happen at the close of a service when two brethren are conversing and find out – even after the fact – that they still look at it differently? How will they react with each other? How will it possibly affect others?

During the month of April, some churches cancelled services. Others held services. Some met on a limited basis. Many had virtual avenues. What was your opinion? What about brother so-in-so, sister so-in-so, or even elder so-in-so who thought differently? In this past month, we saw and experienced things that may to our mind seem inconsistent. Is participating in function X really more risky than function Y, and yet someone deemed X to be illegal while Y was ok? Questions to some degree we have all shared and wondered about regardless of our station. When brethren are meeting again in a general way, we will interact with people, and these sets of things will crop up in conversation and interaction.

One of the things that I have always marveled about concerning the church is that life station does not matter. In business enterprises, assets are sought based on different factors. In athletic competition, skills are prized and pursued. In the church, someone’s financial status, gender, age, intellect, physical prowess, etc. do not matter. What other institution on earth can say anything even remotely close? Because of this unique culture and association of people within a local church, people will have differing viewpoints. Do you think Democrats and Republicans have worshipped together? How about Loyalists and Patriots during colonial days? What about Jews and Gentiles in the 1st century? These groups do not think the same, and yet, they have worshipped together down through the ages. While the church agrees on her articles of faith, essential points of church polity, and agrees together in her covenant, our approaches in life vary. Some are “earn and burn” by and large with finances, while others may be hoarders. Do either of these groups have the right of imposition on the other group within the church functions? No in no wise!

We will see people in the coming days who thought others were perhaps crazy to meet during this season. Others may see people they thought were weak to stop meeting. A litany of examples could crop up. However, when the churches are meeting generally, visiting regularly, and having intimate fellowship, the fissures these differences of opinion can bring about should be hastily avoided. I would posit that there is not a soul amongst the churches who does not want peace and unity. For that to happen, charity must have the top shelf display. As the bond of perfectness that covers a multitude of sins, charity keeps us from dwelling on the unimportant or inessential and helps us unite around the important and essential ground of our lives.

Let me give an example that recent days have reminded me of in relation to this point. When people come home to the church, they are “marrying” the Lord’s bride in a ceremonial way. Much like a husband and wife pledge to love each other “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others keep myself only for thee till death do us part,” we pledge our lives to her: the church. When that happens, we are not only joined to the Head of the church but to every member of the body. Much like natural husbands and wives have to learn to “live with one another,” so do church members have to live with one another. Consider. During this time of quarantine and shelter in place, have couples and families had to learn more perfectly to live with one another? My children have begun to lose sense of days not only because school is basically out, but “Daddy is sometimes home on other days than Saturday and Sunday.”

Just as couples and families have to learn how to live with one another, so do we as church members. We will differ in our opinions with each no differently than husbands and wives have differing opinions with each other. For many having been apart for this time, this situation can be exacerbated, and there may be some “growing together” again. Is it profitable for couples to rail on each other when their viewpoints differ? So, we should be careful in our dealings as church members with one another to handle ourselves with the grace, compassion, and charity that the relationship and love demands. It is my firm belief that Satan delighted when brethren were parted, and nothing would delight him more than for brethren to be parted in spirit though joined in body.

A verse that has floated around in my head during recent weeks is Romans 15:1. Paul concludes his discussion Christian liberty from Romans 14 by employing the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, not to seek the pleasing of self. What is interesting from his Romans 14 discussion is that the lifestyle he deemed “weak” would likely be deemed by the participants as “strong.” Someone who refrains from meat and observes days would think their character and way of life stronger than those who don’t. If we are honest with ourselves, we would all like to think we are strong rather than weak. Whether we are or not is immaterial. If we seek not the pleasure of self but rather to help and bear with others, things tend to take care of themselves. Whatever our opinions were and are, whether we really are the weak or the strong, we need to bear with one another and not please ourselves. If we do this, charity will be displayed and the fruit of that endeavor will be the peace and unity that we desire and yearn for.

Recent days have been marked by so many of doing the best we can when we can with what we can. Nothing should be materially any different in days to come. May we do what we can like the poor widow. May we do it when we can as opportunity and circumstance allows, and may we do all we can heartily as unto the Lord. Families have had to make tough decisions in recent days. Pastors have had to navigate uncharted waters. Churches have had to make different calls in different places. May we bear one another’s burdens in days to come. May our earnest desire be the peace and unity of Zion. The path to get there is the roadway of charity. I look forward to seeing people I haven’t seen in some time. I look forward to hugging people I have had to be socially distant from. I look forward to washing the saint’s feet when next we commune. May those bright and happy moments not be spoiled and marred by ill will, bitterness, or any other thing that defiles the fellowship we can have with Him and one another.

In Hope,

Bro Philip