



Becky Combee Ministries, Inc.

Out With Strife

The call of the Scripture is, “Let there be no strife.”¹ This seems impossible. Doesn’t it? Yet this is the instruction of God’s inspired Word. It says, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.”² In times of tension, antagonism, and pressure surely this word from the Lord is out of reach. Can we respond to difficulties without strife? What an overwhelming command!

According to Webster’s Dictionary, strife is contention for superiority and struggle for victory, opposition, agitation and quarrels. I know you and I recognize this definition. We are all too familiar with controversies, bickering, disputes, and feuds. We quickly identify with the often day-to-day battle that promotes our desire; the verbal contention that defends our actions and adamantly declares, “Just do it MY way.”

However, the Word of God says, “Let each esteem other better than themselves.”² The writings of the apostle Paul further state, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man

also on the things of others.”³ Then in Romans 12:10, we read, “Honor others more than you do yourself.”⁴ We cannot circumvent these verses of Scripture. We cannot resist God’s instructions with trite excuses. This Word of the Lord to value others before ourselves is God’s command to all of us.

God’s Word recognizes strife as a work of the flesh. It is our flesh that loudly says, “Do for ME,” “Bring to ME,” and “Give to ME.” It

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is not concerned about the needs of others and is not hesitant to defend itself with strife-laden words. The apostle James says these words of strife give vent to “every evil work.”⁵ This evil potential of strife is confirmed when the Scripture declares, ‘If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!’⁶ I love this verse of Scripture. Surely, its graphic warning will cause us to “set a watch over our mouth.”⁷

Every Christian is instructed to crucify his

flesh. The words of Scripture vary, but it doesn't matter if you crucify your flesh, mortify your members, or present your bodies a living sacrifice. Each expression simply means we cannot honor the leadership of our flesh. The flesh approves loud, angry words and sanctions verbal and physical abuse. It enjoys murmuring and complaining and applauds jealousy. When the flesh speaks, it promotes physical passions. It does not declare the Word of the Lord.

There is no success or prosperity through the works of the flesh. The angry voice of strife does not produce the righteousness of God.⁸ Yet strife and anger challenge each of us. Can we face anger without collapse?

There is wonderful counsel in the Word of God. The inspired word of the apostle James advises us to "always be willing to listen and slow to speak."⁹ Certainly, if we would dedicate ourselves to hearing the "other side of the story," we could eliminate many arguments. Often, however, our concern for MY idea, MY plan, or MY comfort closes our ears and prevents effective listening. We may have a barrage of excuses, such as "I've heard this before," or "You never make sense," or "I don't have time," but the Scripture still clearly speaks. It plainly records, "Lead with your ears and follow up with your tongue."¹⁰ This is God's command.

In the King James Bible, this verse of Scripture says to be "slow to speak."¹¹ I think the old adage "think before you speak" captures the essence of this Word from God. In the book of Proverbs, there are several verses that repeat this godly principle. First, King Solomon records, "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer."¹² Then similarly, he advises, "The heart of the wise teaches his mouth."¹³ If we followed these verses carefully, I believe we

would not speak until we could say what God says. These admonitions of Proverbs are true. "Watch your words, and hold your tongue; you'll save yourself a lot of grief."¹⁴

Our final caution I have practiced for many years. Here again, the book of Proverbs speaks. It says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath."¹⁵ In the early years of our marriage, I was more verbal than my husband, Wayne. I would shout and Wayne would pout. This verse rescued me. When I lowered my voice and spoke gentle, pleasant words, instead of harsh, painful words, my words calmed the storm.

If we listen carefully and speak kind, soft words by divine unction, less strife dominates our lives. Refuse to quarrel and argue. It is the will of God.

¹Ge 13:8 ²Php 2:3 ³Php 2:4 ⁴CEV ⁵Jas 3:16 ⁶Gal 5:15 NKJ ⁷Ps 141:3, author's paraphrase ⁸Jas 1:20 ⁹Jas 1:19 NCV ¹⁰Jas 1:19-21 MSG ¹¹Jas 1:19 ¹²Pr 15:28 ¹³Pr 16:23 ¹⁴Pr 21:23 MSG ¹⁵Pr 15:1

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AUGUST 15-16, 2012

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