

Psalms - Commentaries by John Brereton

Toledo Conference: 1973, Peace in the Assembly

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Address—J. Brereton

Well, dear young people, there are quite a number of passages from the Word of God that I would like to look at this afternoon. But the first one I would like to look at is in the 85th Psalm, Psalm, Psalm 85 and verse 10. Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other now I'm sure that many, perhaps most here. Have enjoyed this verse before in connection with the work carried out at Calvary's cross. When mercy and truth met together. When God in His wondrous mercy provided a Savior, and that precious Savior answered to God for all our sins. Righteousness. The righteousness of God fully upheld at Calvary's cross. And peace that flows out as a result of that precious work. What I would like to suggest to you, dear young people, this afternoon, that we also have in this verse that which we should look for. And anticipate will be seen in the assembly, in the little assembly where you are, where I am in our company as we come together like we have for these last three days to see that which brings peace. That which conveys to our hearts the mercy of God. Wondrous ways of grace with us, and yet at the same time that which becomes his house, that which is suited to the character and the nature of the One to whom we're gathered. Just recently I was down in a city in Eastern Canada. And I met a young lady there who is very seriously ill and she is suffering a considerable amount of pain and as far as her life here in this world is concerned. I believe it is drawing to a close. Well, this dear sister was gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ about two years ago. And when I visited with her recently. She spoke to me about the miracle. That God had worked. In her life. Of opening her eyes to see. That there was such a precious thing as being gathered. To the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The way she put it to me was in effect like this. She said that she had lived for quite a number of years as a Christian. Serving the Lord in a foreign country for a number of those years. And in all those years, she had never realized that it was possible to actually sit down in the presence of the Lord. Well, I said to some afterwards I wished in some ways I had tape recorded that conversation. Because, beloved young people, what I covet for you and for myself as that we might to value the preciousness of the privilege of being in the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to find there in the assembly that righteousness and peace. Kiss each other. Could we turn now to Matthew chapter 18 for a moment? Matthew chapter 18 and verse 18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven.

And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loose. In heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything. That they shall ask, It shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. Four where two or three? Are gathered together. In or unto my name. There am I. In the midst of them. Our brother the other day touched on this verse. He opened it up to us to see how we have here that precious divine ground upon which you and I are privileged to gather. Gathered unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. To be actually able, dear young people, like we did this morning. To sit in the very presence of the Lord Jesus. To have His promise fulfilled and to have the enjoyment of it in our souls. There am I in the midst of them. Now I would like to add 1 further comment in connection with that. Beloved young people, the Lord has set His name. In a place, and called upon you and I to be gathered to that precious name. He has promised that where we are gathered together to that precious name, there he is. Beloved young people, may you and I be kept. From ever charging the Lord Jesus. With being the cause. Of dividing the Saints of God by placing His name. In a number of different places. The effect of such action could only be to divide the Saints of God. And we find here in this off quoted verse that it speaks of two or three gathered together. I would also draw your attention to the fact that it says two or three. I believe the other day our brother used the expression the lowest plurality. Let us beloved young people be very clear as to this. The word of God says. Two or three. And consequently where there are two. Or three gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have his promise. There he is in the midst of them. And we have an assembly, an assembly. An assembly that may consist of two, but nevertheless an assembly. And we have that. Where we would expect anticipate to see righteousness and peace. Meet together. Now there may be, dear young people, some functions. That. Two or three. May not be able to carry out. For instance, a very simple illustration would be a man and his wife. Meeting together, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the promise of the Lord Jesus there. In the midst faced with the question of writing a letter of commendation. They would find that they would be unable to do so. And the result would be that they would look to another assembly to assist them.

In that matter. Another more serious instance could be a situation where there were a man and his wife. Two gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, an assembly. But faced with the question of dealing with sin on the part of one or the other. They would find that they were unable to take any action. And they would look to assistance from another assembly gathered similarly to the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the same ground. We find in this portion that we've just read that the Word of God speaks about binding and losing. And from this we learn, dear young people, that there is righteousness. There is that which becomes. The name to whom we are gathered. And there is a discipline connected with the assembly. The word of God says whatsoever. Ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven. And consequently the act of the assembly. And let us bear in mind that where it is possible, the assembly can be true. That takes such action. The word of God says where the assembly acts. It carries with it the authority of the name of the person to whom we are gathered, and that action is binding upon all other assemblies gathered to the same precious name, gathered on the same divine ground where the Lord Jesus is in the midst. Well, brethren, that is what we, if I could put it that way. We might refer to as the righteous side, and it is a vital importance. But I would like to look now for a little while on the other side. The mercy and the peace side. Would you turn with me to the 14th chapter of Acts? God has not left us, dear young people. Without a pattern in his precious word as to what he anticipates will be seen in the assembly. It may be that you and I will see that. In some ways our particular local assembly comes short. In some cases we may feel it comes very far short. But the exercise should be, beloved young people, for you and for myself, indeed for us, all that we might conform to the pattern that God has laid out for us in his Word. If you notice in the 14th chapter of Acts. And the 26th verse. And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come,

and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles, and there they abode long time with the disciples. And certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When, therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension. And disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas. And certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders. About this question.

And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenix and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. Antioch was a Gentile city. And we find here. That a very serious question has arisen. There are those who have come down from Judea. And they are teaching that which is fundamentally bad doctrine. Of the most important kind. Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. This is adding something to the work of Christ. Our most serious thing? But we find beloved young people that there is grace. To meet this effort on the part of the enemy of our souls. To divide the beloved people of God. And so we find that the decision is made. That the question will be taken to Jerusalem. And they are reviewed with the apostles and elders. The first thing perhaps we should notice is that there was number such command in the word of God for them to do so. They had no such thing as an earthly center. To which question? Should be referred. It's true the apostles were there. But the fact remains that God Center is not a physical city. Then or now? And yet we'll see. I trust, dear young people, how God in his grace. Worked with these beloved Saints. Preserve the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Now the first question that obviously arises is why? Why should they take the matter to Jerusalem? Were they not an assembly at Antioch? Indeed they were. If you turn back to the 13th chapter of Acts. And the first verse. It says now there were in the church Oregon, the assembly that was at Antioch. Therefore we know on the authority of the Word of God. It was an assembly at Antioch. The next question that would arise is the question of the apostles. Well, now if you'll turn to the 14th chapter of Acts. And the fourth verse. It says, But the multitude of the city was divided, and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. You go down to the 14th verse, it says which when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes and ran in among the people crying out. So we find that at Antioch. There were two apostles. Paul and Barnabas. If we were to take the time to read through the 15th chapter of Acts word by word. We would find that we are not told how many apostles there were at Jerusalem. But we have two identified for us. Perhaps I should say probably 2. Peter was certainly there. And a man called James. I leave it to those who are much better instructed than I am as to whether this James was James the son of Alphaeus, or whether it was James the brother of the Lord.

But the fact remains that at most we have two identified for us, and there were two at Antioch. And so we perhaps can say that the assembly at Antioch. Was. Supplied with at least the same number of apostles. As are positively identified as being at Jerusalem. The next question that might arise as to why Antioch would not decide this matter for themselves might be the question of numbers. You know, sometimes, as we mentioned before. There are decisions that an assembly, or I should say, matters that an assembly consisting of two are not able to handle. There might very well be circumstances arise where the smallness of an assembly. Would give that assembly. Cause to very seriously consider. The effect that their decision is going to have on the consciences. Of those gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ elsewhere. Well, if we turn over to the 11th chapter of Acts for a moment. And the 22nd verse. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church, which was in Jerusalem. And they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad? And exhorted the mall, but with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a Goodman, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. And much people was added unto the Lord. Well, we find beloved young people that the decision. By the assembly at Antioch. To take their problem to Jerusalem was not a result of numbers, because Antioch was a large assembly. Another question that has arisen and may arise, beloved young people, and I am speaking very frankly this afternoon. Is the question of an assembly where it is made-up largely of one family? I trust that my comments at the beginning of the meeting have been sufficiently clear. To firmly establish that too, regardless of name. Regardless of relationship to each other, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ constitute an assembly. But the question may very well arise where the assembly consists largely of one family. Or those closely related to seriously consider. The effect upon the consciences and the exercise of those gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ elsewhere. If a decision is made that is going to there that is going to have. Widespread ramifications throughout the company gathered to his precious name. Now we find that God by His Spirit has answered this question for us too, in connection with Antioch. If you go back to the 13th chapter of Acts for a moment and the first verse. It says now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers. As Barnabas. You recall he came from Cyprus.

And Simeon, that was called Niger. I have heard it suggested, and it may well be true, that Simeon was a *****. Lucius of Cyrene. If you look at your map, Cyrene was on the coast of Africa. Manian, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch. One who had brought up been brought up in the inner councils of the ruling. Families in Israel. And saw who came from Tarsus. So we find that God by his Spirit. Makes it very clear to us that here at Antioch there was number question. About being largely one family, there was a diversity. Of families, but gathered to the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The next question that might arise, and again, beloved brethren here young people, this all question also can arise today. As to whether the Saints of Antioch were going on well. Sometimes this presents a serious stumbling block. An assembly is faced with a problem, but there is not the going on with the Lord. In the assembly there is the allowance of all sorts of things that make spiritual discernment difficult, if not impossible. And in such circumstances it might very well become such an assembly to recognize their state and look for. Resistance from another assembly. But we find God has answered this question for us too, in connection with Antioch. If you would turn over to the 14th chapter again, I'm sorry, I beg your pardon, The 11th chapter of Acts. We'll read from the 22nd verse again. Speaking of Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad. And exhorted the mall, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. You go down to the 26th verse. The latter part of the verse. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. We find here was an assembly. We find that Barnabas comes down from Jerusalem. And he having been spent a long time in that assembly at Jerusalem. Where there had been much instruction, much teaching the presence of the apostles, he comes down, and in this assembly at Antioch he sees that which gives him. To be glad at what the grace of God had wrought. But furthermore, we find it says that they were called Christians first at Antioch. Here was again the evidence for us that it was an assembly that was going on. With the Lord. And so the decision to refer the question in the 15th of Acts to Jerusalem was not a question of the godliness of the assembly at Antioch. Another question that might arise and can arise today. Is where their subject comes up as to an assembly where there may be a lack of those who take the oversight, those who perhaps in the assembly feel that in their local assembly there is a lack of those who are grounded in the word of God. A lack of those who are able to open up the Word of God and give the wisdom of the Word of God for the particular circumstances. And in such cases it may well become an assembly again. To look for counsel and assistance elsewhere. Well, God has answered this for us too, I believe in connection with Antioch, if you'll go to the 13th chapter again.

And the 5th at the first verse, which we have already read, it says there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers. No shortage at Antioch of those who were able to expound the word of God. Here was an assembly that perhaps many of us here might covet. Where? Where were those who were able? Qualify to expound, to teach the word of God. So again, the reason for referring the matter to Jerusalem does not lie here. And there's one last. Question that perhaps we might consider. And that is whether the best qualified. The one who was most knowledgeable on the subject in hand? Perhaps he was at Jerusalem. Well, let's turn over to Galatians for a moment. The 2nd chapter of Galatians. Do you recall, dear young people, what the question was? These teachers said except they be circumcised, according to the law of Moses, they cannot be saved. That was what they were told at Antioch. Now if you look at the 2nd chapter of Galatians for a moment. And the 11th verse. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I, that is Paul withstood him to the faith, because he was to be blamed. Before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compel us, thou, the Gentiles, to live as do the Jews, we who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles? Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law. But by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Well, dear young people, what do we find? If I may put it colloquially, we find that the expert was an Antioch, not at Jerusalem. Paul was the one who understood more clearly than them all the status, the standing of the Gentile. And yet, beloved young people here we have a circumstance where we have an assembly at Antioch, and this assembly, as we consider it, had their own apostles, Paul and Barnabas. It was a large assembly, not composed of those who were immediately related to each other. An assembly that was going on with Glock. An assembly that was endowed with prophets and teachers. And lastly, an assembly where the very best qualified, the best instructed man on the subject was right there at Antioch. And yet we find, when we go back to the 15th chapter of Acts, that they decided that this matter should be taken to Jerusalem. Why? Would you turn with me now? We'll be coming back to the 15th of Acts in just a moment. But if you'll turn to the 4th chapter of Ephesians for a moment. The 4th chapter of Ephesians. And the first verse. Therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness.

Long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling. Here we might say is the 7th. Consideration and the one that I believe gives us to see the wisdom of God. In the 15th chapter of Acts. And endeavoring to keep. The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I believe we have seen how Antioch was qualified in every way. To make the decision that they were faced with. But, beloved brethren, love in exercise the desire to keep the unity of the Spirit. The looking to the Lord that Satan may not be able to drive a wedge. Between the Gentile assembly at Antioch and the Jewish assembly at Jerusalem. LED them. To decide that this matter should be taken to Jerusalem. Now let's consider for justice a moment. Such a decision. We've already said, and I trust have shown from the Word of God, that Antioch was qualified. As an assembly. And now the question that is before them is one that affects them, that is affects Antioch much more than Jerusalem. These ones who had come down from Judea were trying to lay something upon them at Antioch. The first thought that we would. Naturally considered. Would be Jerusalem would be the last place to go to to look for a favorable decision on such a question? Would you go back to the very center, the very place where these? People had come from the very core of Judaism to expect that the liberty of the Spirit of God would be shown toward the Gentiles. But all, beloved brethren, that is exactly what they did. Counting upon God, they went to Jerusalem. To consult there with the apostles and elders. You'll notice too that they didn't write them a letter. They went to see them, They went to sit down with them. To discuss the matter fully and frankly, counting upon the God of all grace to workout in their assembly, righteousness and peace. The next thing you would notice in the 15th chapter of Acts is in the 4th is in the third verse. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Venus and Samaria. Declaring the righteousness of the Gentiles. I'm sorry, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles. And they caused great joy unto all the brethren. Here they were at Antioch, faced with a very serious question. But all beloved young people, did they occupy all the Saints throughout their journey with the problem that they were faced with? Nor as they journeyed up to Jerusalem to take the matter up with the Saints there. They talked to the assemblies that they visited. They talked to the Christians that they came in contact with, of God's wondrous grace in reaching out and saving the Gentiles. They talked about what God had wrought. They talked about the miracle of His grace, of His love, And they caused not distress.

Not heartache, not sorrow. They cause joy. There's the very language of the Word of God. And they caused great joy. Unto all the brethren. All beloved young people, may we profit by it to see that God would have us occupied with His goodness and His grace. And the result will be that as we talk together about His goodness and His grace. We're going to find our hearts overflowing in praise. If you go down now to the. Fourth Verse. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders. And they declared all things that God had done with them. And there rose up certain of the sects of the Pharisees, which believed, saying. That it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses. Now, dear young people, I believe we learn a lesson here too. If you will compare what was said here with what was said in the first verse, you will notice there is a difference. These ones that came down from Jerusalem said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, he cannot be saved. Now these ones Pharisees rise up in Jerusalem and say that it was needful to circumcise them. And to command them to keep the law of Moses. They don't say that you can't be saved without being circumcised, but they say it's needful. And that they should be instructed to keep the law of Moses. Well, you might interpret this as an improvement. And you know, beloved young people, this is one of the efforts that the enemy of our souls uses. When that which is false is introduced amongst the Saints of God, and where the opposition to that false teaching is raised up of God, the next effort that you will find is that the enemy seeks to modify it to perhaps reduce the seriousness of it in an effort to make a less serious form of it palatable to the Saints of God. Well, we can see here that God by His Spirit resisted any such effort. Peter rises up and says, no, not so. We can't put upon these people a burden that we ourselves as Jews could not bear. You notice the 10th verse Peter speaking, he says Now therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? All beloved young people the grace of God. Words coming from Peter the apostle to the circumcision. Words coming from Peter that says no, the Gentiles are not to be called upon to keep the law, not to be called upon to be circumcised. This burden we couldn't bear, and they should not be called upon to bear it either. Then we find in the. 13th verse After they had held their peace, James answered. Now if you remember the verse in Galatians chapter 2 That we read, I believe it would be a reasonable inference from the passage in Galatians chapter 2 to believe that James was even more strict concerning the Jewish law than Peter was. Peter was quite happy to eat with the Gentiles when he was at Antioch until he saw some that came from James. And then he was worried and he separated himself. But now it's James, the one that seems to be even more strict in his

application of Jewish principles. He's the one who stands up and says in the 19th verse, Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God, but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled.

And from blood. In other words, the James says we cannot call upon them to keep the law, but simply to observe the general moral principles that apply throughout the whole word of God. And the result was that God in his grace. In his grace, beloved young people. Met an effort by the enemy to divide the Saints of God and the result was righteousness, a decision that was in accordance with the Word of God. And peace between two assemblies. A Gentile assembly. And a Jewish assembly. This assembly that decided. That they should act in this way. Found that God was able. To work that which was for His glory. And for the blessing of His people. Now in the 4th chapter of Ephesians. We find there, if we could go back to it for a moment. But it says with all lowliness. And meekness. With long-suffering. Forbearing one another in love. I'm sure there aren't any of us, certainly not the speaker, who speaks on such a subject as this without feeling how far short we come in the exercise of these principles. But the word of God says with all lowliness. And meekness. Now, if we were to turn over to the 11th chapter of Matthew. We would find there that it speaks concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And says for I am meek and lowly in heart. Now the Lord Jesus in his pathway here was meek. He did not give offense. And he was lowly. In that he did not take offense in spite of some of the. Terrible things that were said concerning him. When we come over to Ephesians chapter 4. We have before us the subject of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. And here it speaks of loneliness first. And meekness afterwards. I would like to suggest to you this afternoon one reason why it is given in this way. Brethren, we have seen. To our sorrow. Felt the reaction in our own hearts, I'm sure. That things are done. Or said. And the result is that my heart. My old nature reacts. To what is said or what is done? It takes exception. It rebels. And the loneliness is not seen. In other words, I take offense. I'm offended by what brother so and so said or did. And the result then is that the response that is seen is not one of meekness. It's not that which is to be expected from a child of God. If I am not lowly. I'm going to take offense and the result is I'm not going to meet be meek.

But I'm going to respond in kind. And give offense. And the result will be. That there will not be the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We find, the word of God says, forbearing one another in love. All beloved brethren, we've had a little bit of this in the meeting this last few days. About that love being in exercise amongst us. That the world even may recognize that we are his disciples. But that the machinery. Of the assembly might be kept running smoothly. That there might not only be seen simply the righteousness. But also the peace. Not just the truth, but also the mercy. Now, beloved brethren, at the cross. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mercy was displayed and truth was not sacrificed in any way. Righteousness was maintained, but peace was procured. And beloved brethren, I submit to you, and I submit to my own heart, that God has put this pattern for us in His Word to give us to see the exercise that there should be on your part and on mine. To, as it were, sit down and take stock as to whether we are endeavoring. To keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is not a matter of Maine, simply as it were, sitting in my local assembly and saying we can decide it here and everyone else is going to have to bow to it. Beloved brethren, the Word of God is very clear. Whatsoever is bound on earth is bound in heaven. But at the same time, the word of God establishes a pattern for me. For you to see that which is becoming that which he looks to see in those who are endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Law, forbearance, long-suffering. Loneliness. Meekness. I believe we see it all in that assembly at Antioch. That would go up, make that long journey just to ensure. That Satan was not to be allowed. Divide the Saints of God. Now, I would add a further word of caution. It is the unity of the Spirit. Consequently, it cannot be unity at the expense of truth. It cannot be unity at the expense of righteousness, but beloved brethren, it is possible. To have righteousness. And peace. It is possible to have mercy and truth. There is one body stand. Thank God we have nothing to do with keeping the unity of the body. But we are called upon to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. And beloved brethren, I suggest to you, and I suggest to myself, it requires positive exercise. Not a matter of simply drifting, but a positive exercise to realize, as it were, that here I am sitting down in my local assembly and facing a decision, and to bear in mind that what we are about to do is going to affect all those who are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And how? How can we, without insisting on our rights as an assembly, without insisting on our status in any way but with loneliness and meekness, doing everything that is possible, consistent with truth and righteousness? That will keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Now, if our time is just about gone, if you'll go back to the 15th of acts for justice a moment. I believe there are. Two other matters that I would like to draw your attention to. You notice it says in the 15th of Acts and the. 22nd verse Then pleased at the apostles and elders with the whole church. To send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas, surname Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. And they wrote letters by them after this. And simply goes on to confirm what had already been said. Now if you go on to the 27th verse, it says we have, we have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. We find, beloved brethren again, that they would commit to this assembly at Antioch in writing their decision. And they were very thankful to get it. But at the same time they said we're going to send some of our company. To make that long journey all the way back up there to Antioch, to let those beloved brethren up there have it confirmed that what we're saying here in the letter is really and truly the expression of our hearts that they might have it confirmed by word of mouth. All beloved brethren, is it not a joy to the heart to see this care, this love in exercise? That would send these ones on this journey. Simply to confirm what was already a gracious answer in a letter. It loads again in the 15th chapter of Acts and the. 32nd Verse. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words. And confirm them. Not only did these two make this long journey back to Antioch, but God overruled in His grace and brought even further blessing out of it, that from that very place where those ones had come from, that brought the error, brought the evil teaching in in the 1st place, from that very same place should come those who would build up the Saints. Confirm them in the path of the truth. All beloved brethren, God is able. God is able where we look to Him and where there is the meekness. The lowliness first, the meekness that doesn't insist in any way upon our rights, but looks to him. Now I would like to just read two other verses if you take the time to turn over to James chapter 3 for a moment. James Chapter 3. And verse 17. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Beloved brethren, we see here, I trust we've mentioned it a number of times this afternoon already, but I would like to repeat it. The wisdom that is from above is first pure. Consequently, the mercy cannot be at the expense of truth. But. Righteousness and peace can kiss each other. Pure, then peaceable. Gentle, easy to be entreated. Oh, that's what they found there at Antioch. They were ready to go all the way up to Jerusalem. And when they got to Jerusalem, they found their brethren that were ready to listen, ready to help, and in the fear of God together render a decision that would be for the glory of God and that would maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Brethren, let us not give up the purity. But, beloved Saints of God, may we never, never, never. Abandoned. The. The gentleness, the easiness to be entreated. One other verse I would like to read is in 13th chapter of Hebrews.

Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 7. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God. Whose faith follow considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever.

Toledo Conference: 1973, Righteousness and Peace

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General Meetings, Toledo, November 1973, addressed by John Brearton. Jesus our Lord, we know thy name. Thy name is all our trust. Thou wilt not put our souls to shame, nor let our hope be lost. #51 some brother would start it for us. Well, dear young people, there are quite a number of passages from the Word of God that I would like to look at this afternoon. But the first one I would like to look at is in the 85th Psalm. Psalm 85 and verse 10. Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Now I'm sure that many, perhaps most here. Have enjoyed this verse before. In connection with the work carried out at Calvary's Cross. When mercy and truth met together. When God in his wondrous mercy provided A Savior, and that precious Savior answered to God for all our sins. Righteousness. The righteousness of God fully upheld at Calvary's cross. And peace that flows out as a result of that precious work. What I would like to suggest to you, dear young people, this afternoon, that we also have in this verse. That which we should look for. And anticipate will be seen in the assembly, in the little assembly where you are, where I am in our company as we come together like we have for these last three days to see that which brings peace. That which conveys to our hearts the mercy of God, His wondrous ways of grace with us. And yet at the same time, that which becomes his house, that which is suited to the character and the nature of the one to whom we're gathered.

Just recently I was down in a city in Eastern Canada. And I met a young lady there who is very seriously ill. And she is suffering A considerable amount of pain. And as far as her life here in this world is concerned? I believe it is drawing to a close. Well, this dear sister was gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ about two years ago. And when I visited with her recently. She spoke to me about the miracle. That God had worked. In her life. Of opening her eyes to see. That there was such a precious thing as being gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The way she put it to me was in effect like this. She said that she had lived for quite a number of years as a Christian. Serving the Lord in a foreign country for a number of those years and in all those years, she had never realized that it was possible to actually sit down in the presence of the Lord. Well, I said to some afterwards I wished in some ways I had tape recorded that conversation. Because, beloved young people, what I covet for you and for myself as that we might to value the preciousness of the privilege of being in the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to find there in the assembly that righteousness and peace. Kiss each other. Could we turn now to Matthew chapter 18 for a moment? Matthew chapter 18 and verse 18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven. And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loose in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which is in heaven. For where two or three? Are gathered together. In or unto my name, there am I in the midst of them. Our brother the other day touched on this verse. He opened it up to us to see how we have here that precious divine ground upon which you and I are privileged to gather. Gathered unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. To be actually able, dear young people, like we did this morning. To sit in the very presence of the Lord Jesus, to have His promise fulfilled. And to have the enjoyment of it in our souls. There am I in the midst of them. Now I would like to add 1 further comment in connection with that. Beloved young people, the Lord has set His name. In a place, and called upon you and I to be gathered to that precious name.

He has promised that where we are gathered together. To that precious name, there he is. Beloved young people, may you and I be kept. From ever charging the Lord Jesus. With being the cause. Of dividing the Saints of God by placing His name. And a number of different places. The effect of such action could only be to divide the Saints of God, and we find here in this off quoted verse that it speaks of two or three gathered together. I would also draw your attention to the fact that it says. Two or three. I believe the other day our brother used the expression the lowest plurality. Let us beloved young people be very clear as to this. The word of God says. Two or three. And consequently where there are two or three. Gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have his promise. There he is in the midst of them. And we have an assembly. An assembly. An assembly that may consist of two, but nevertheless. An assembly. And we have that. Where we would expect anticipate to see righteousness and peace. Meet together. Now there may be, dear young people, some functions. That 2. Or three may not be able to carry out. For instance, a very simple illustration would be a man and his wife. Meeting together, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the promise of the Lord Jesus there. In the midst. Faced with the question of writing a letter of commendation. They would find that they would be unable to do so. And the result would be that they would look to another assembly to a system in that matter. Another more serious instance could be a situation where there were a man and his wife. Two gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, an assembly. But faced with the question of dealing with sin on the part of one or the other. They would find that they were unable to take any action. And they would look to assistance from another assembly gathered similarly to the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the same ground. We find in this portion that we've just read that the Word of God speaks about binding and losing. And from this we learn, dear young people, that there is righteousness. There is that which becomes. The name to whom we are gathered. And there is a discipline connected with the assembly. The word of God says whatsoever. Ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven. And consequently the act of the assembly.

And let us bear in mind that where it is possible, the assembly can be true that takes such action. The word of God says where the assembly acts. It carries with it the authority of the name of the person to whom we're gathered, and that action is binding upon all other assemblies gathered to the same precious name, gathered on the same divine ground where the Lord Jesus is in the midst. Well, brethren, that is what we, if I could put it that way, we might refer to as the righteous side, and it is a vital importance. But I would like to look now for a little while on the other side. The mercy and the peace side. Would you turn with me to the 14th chapter of Acts? God has not left us, dear young people. Without a pattern in his precious word as to what he anticipates will be seen in the assembly. It may be that you and I will see that. In some ways, our low particular local assembly comes short. In some cases, we may feel it comes very far short. The exercise should be, beloved young people, for you and for myself, indeed for us all that we might conform to the pattern that God has laid out for us in his Word. If you notice in the 14th chapter of Acts. And the 26th verse. And then sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the

grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were calm, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples. And certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses. Ye cannot be saved. When, therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenix and Samaria. Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, And they caused great joy unto all the brethren. Antioch was a Gentile city. And we find here. That a very serious question has arisen. There are those who have come down from Judea. And they are teaching that which is fundamentally bad doctrine. Of the most important kind. Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. This is adding something to the work of Christ. Our most serious thing? But we find beloved young people that there is grace. To meet this effort on the part of the enemy of our souls. To divide the beloved people of God.

And so we find that the decision is made. That the question will be taken to Jerusalem. And they're reviewed with the apostles and elders. The first thing perhaps we should notice is that there was number such command in the word of God for them to do so. They had no such thing as an earthly center to which questions should be referred. It's true the apostles were there. But the fact remains that God Center is not a physical city. Then or now? And yet we'll see. I trust, dear young people, how God in his grace. Worked with these beloved Saints to preserve the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Now the first question that obviously arises is why? Why should they take the matter to Jerusalem? Were they not an assembly at Antioch? Indeed they were. If you turn back to the 13th chapter of Acts. And the first verse. It says now there were in the church Oregon, the assembly that was at Antioch. Therefore we know on the authority of the Word of God. It was an assembly at Antioch. The next question that would arise is the question of the apostles. Well, now if you'll turn to the 14th chapter of Acts. And the fourth verse. It says, But the multitude of the city was divided, and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. You go down to the 14th verse, it says which when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes and ran in among the people crying out. So we find that at Antioch. There were two apostles. Paul and Barnabas. If we were to take the time to read through the 15th chapter of Acts word by word. We would find that we are not told how many apostles there were at Jerusalem. But we have to identify for us. Perhaps I should say probably 2. Peter was certainly there. And a man called James. I leave it to those who are much better instructed than I am as to whether this James was James the son of Alpheus, or whether it was James the brother of the Lord. But the fact remains that at most we have to identify for us, and there were two at Antioch. And so we perhaps can say that the assembly at Antioch. Was supplied with at least the same number of apostles. As are positively identified as being at Jerusalem. The next question that might arise as to why Antioch would not decide this matter for themselves. Might be the question of numbers. You know, sometimes, as we mentioned before. There are decisions that a assembly, or I should say, matters that an assembly consisting of two are not able to.

Handle. There might very well be circumstances arise the. Where the smallness of an assembly. Would give that assembly. Cause to very seriously consider. The effect that their decision is going to have on the consciences. Of those gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ elsewhere. Well, if we turn over to the 11th chapter of Acts for a moment. And the 22nd verse. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord, for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. And much people was added unto the Lord. Well, we find beloved young people that the decision by the assembly of Antioch. To take their problem to Jerusalem was not a result of numbers, because Antioch was a large assembly. Another question that has arisen and may arise, beloved young people, and I am speaking very frankly this afternoon. Is the question of an assembly where it is made-up largely of one family? I trust that my comments at the beginning of the meeting have been sufficiently clear. Firmly establish that too, regardless of name. Regardless of relationship to each other, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ constitute an assembly. But the question may very well arise where the assembly consists largely of one family. Or those closely related to seriously consider. The effects upon the consciences and the exercise of those gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ elsewhere. If a decision is made that is going to there, that is going to have. Widespread ramifications throughout the company gathered to his precious name. Now we find that God by His Spirit has answered this question for us too, in connection with Antioch. If you go back to the 13th chapter of Acts for a moment and the first verse. It says now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers as Barnabas. You recall he came from Cyprus. And Simeon, that was called Niger. I have heard it suggested, and it may well be true, that Simeon was a *****. Lucius of Cyrene. If you look at your map, Cyrene was on the coast of Africa. Manian, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, one who had brought up, been brought up in the inner councils of the ruling families in Israel. And saw who came from Tarsus. So we find that God by his Spirit makes it very clear to us that here at Antioch. There was number question about being largely one family. There was a diversity of families, but gathered to the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The next question that might arise, and again, beloved brethren, dear young people, this all question also can arise today.

As to whether the Saints of Antioch were going on well. Sometimes this presents a serious stumbling block. An assembly is faced with a problem, but there is not the going on with the Lord. In the assembly there is the allowance of all sorts of things that make spiritual discernment difficult, if not impossible. And in such circumstances it might very well become such an assembly to recognize their state and look for assistance. From another assembly. What we find, God has answered this question for us too, in connection with Antioch. If you would turn over to the 14th chapter again, I'm sorry, I beg your pardon, The 11th chapter of Acts. We'll read from the 22nd verse again. Speaking of Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad. And exhorted the mall, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. If you go down to the 26th verse. The latter part of the verse. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. We find here was an assembly. We find that Barnabas comes down from Jerusalem. And he having been spent a long time. In that assembly at Jerusalem. Where there had been much instruction, much teaching the presence of the apostles, he comes down, and in this assembly at Antioch he sees that which gives him. To be glad at what the grace of God had wrought. But furthermore, we find it says that they were called Christians first at Antioch. Here was again the evidence for us that it was an assembly that was going on with the Lord. And so the decision to refer the question in the 15th of Acts to Jerusalem was not a question of the godliness of the assembly at Antioch. Another question that might arise and can arise today. Is where the subject comes up as to an assembly where there may be a lack of those who take the oversight, those who perhaps in the assembly feel that in their local assembly there is a lack of those who are grounded in the word of God. A lack of those who are able to open up the Word of God and give the wisdom of the Word of God for the particular circumstances. And in such cases it may well become an assembly again to look for counsel and assistance elsewhere. Well, God has answered this for us too, I believe in connection with Antioch, if you'll go to the 13th chapter again. And the 5th at the first verse, which we have already read, it says there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers. No shortage at Antioch of those

who were able to expound the word of God. Here was an assembly that perhaps many of us here might covet. Where? Where were those who were ably qualified to expound, to teach the word of God? So the again, the reason for referring the matter to Jerusalem does not lie here. And there's one last. Question that perhaps we might consider. And that is whether the best qualified.

The one who was most knowledgeable on the subject in hand? Perhaps he was at Jerusalem. Well, let's turn over to Galatians for a moment. The second chapter of Galatians. Do you recall, dear young people, what the question was? These teachers said except they be circumcised, according to the law of Moses, they cannot be saved. That was what they were told of Antioch. Now if you look at the second chapter of Galatians for a moment. And the 11th verse. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I, that is Paul, withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed, for before that certain came from James. He did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him in so much that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews. Why compel us, thou the Gentiles, to live as do the Jews, we who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Well, dear young people, what do we find? If I may put it colloquially, we find that the expert was an Antioch, not at Jerusalem. Paul was the one who understood more clearly than the law, the status, the standing of the Gentile. And yet, beloved young people here we have a circumstance where we have an assembly at Antioch, and this assembly, as we consider it, had their own apostles, Paul and Barnabas. It was a large assembly, not composed of those who were immediately related to each other. An assembly that was going on. With God, an assembly that was endowed with prophets and teachers. And lastly, an assembly where the very best qualified, the best instructed man on the subject was right there at Antioch. And yet we find when we go back to the 15th chapter of Acts, that they decided. That this matter should be taken to Jerusalem. Why? Would you turn with me now? We'll be coming back to the 15th of action. Just a moment, but if you turn to the 4th chapter of Ephesians for a moment. The 4th chapter of Ephesians. And the first verse I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith your call, with all loneliness and meekness. With long-suffering forbearing one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit. Even as you are called in one hope of your calling. Here we might say is the 7th. Consideration and the one that I believe gives us to see the wisdom of God.

In the 15th chapter of Acts. And endeavoring to keep. The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I believe we have seen how Antioch was qualified in every way to make the decision that they were faced with. But, beloved brethren, love in exercise. The desire to keep the unity of the Spirit. The looking to the Lord that Satan may not be able to drive a wedge between the Gentile assembly at Antioch and the Jewish assembly at Jerusalem. LED them. To decide that this matter should be taken to Jerusalem. Now let's consider for justice a moment. Such a decision. We've already said, and I trust have shown from the Word of God. That Antioch was qualified. As an assembly. And now the question that is before them is one that affects them, that is effects Antioch much more than Jerusalem. These ones who had come down from Judea were trying to lay something upon them at Antioch. The first thought that we would. Naturally considered. Would be Jerusalem would be the last place to go to to look for a favorable decision on such a question? Would you go back to the very center, the very place where these people had come from, the very core of Judaism, to expect that the liberty of the Spirit of God would be shown toward the Gentiles? But all, beloved brethren, that is exactly what they did. Counting upon God, they went to Jerusalem to consult there with the apostles and elders. You'll notice too that they didn't write them a letter. They went to see them, they went to sit down with them to discuss the matter fully and frankly, counting upon the God of all grace to work out in their assembly righteousness and peace. The next thing you notice in the 15th chapter of Acts is in the 4th is in the third verse. And being brought on their way by the church, they pass through Venus and Samaria. Declaring the righteousness of the Gentiles. I'm sorry, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles. And they caused great joy unto all the brethren. Here they were at Antioch, faced with a very serious question. But all beloved young people, did they occupy all the Saints throughout their journey with the problem that they were faced with? No, as they journeyed up to Jerusalem to take the matter up with the Saints there, they talked to the assemblies that they visited. They talked to the Christians that they came in contact with, of God's wondrous grace in reaching out and saving the Gentiles. They talked about what God had wrought, they talked about the miracle of His grace, of his love, and they caused not distress, not heartache, not sorrow. They cause joy. There's the very language of the Word of God. And they cause great joy unto all the brethren, all beloved young people, may we profit by it to see that God would have us occupied with His goodness and His grace. And the result will be that as we talk together about His goodness and His grace, we're going to find our hearts overflowing in praise.

If you go down now to the. Fourth Verse. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. And there rose up certain of the sects of the Pharisees, which believed, saying that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. Now, dear young people, I believe we learn a lesson here too. If you will compare what was said here with what was said in the first verse, you will notice there's a difference. These ones that came down from Jerusalem said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, he cannot be saved. Now these ones Pharisees rise up in Jerusalem and say that it was needful to circumcise them. And to command them to keep the law of Moses. They don't say that you can't be saved without being circumcised, but they say it's needful. And that they should be instructed to keep the law of Moses. Well, you might interpret this as an improvement. And you know, beloved young people, this is one of the efforts that the enemy of our souls uses. When that which is false is introduced amongst the Saints of God, and where the opposition to that false teaching is raised up of God, the next effort that you will find is that the enemy seeks to modify it to perhaps reduce the seriousness of it in an effort to make a less serious form of it palatable to the Saints of God. Well, we can see here. That God by his Spirit resisted any such effort. Peter rises up and says, no, not so. We can't put upon these people a burden that we ourselves as Jews could not bear. You notice the 10th verse Peter speaking, he says Now therefore, why tempt you God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples? Which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear all beloved young people the grace of God. Words coming from Peter the Apostle to the circumcision. Words coming from Peter that says no, the Gentiles are not to be called upon to keep the law, not to be called upon to be circumcised. This burden we couldn't bear, and they should not be called upon to bear it either. Then we find in the. 13th verse After they had held their peace, James answered. Now if you remember the verse in Galatians chapter 2 That we read. I believe it would be a reasonable inference from the passage in Galatians chapter 2 to believe that James was even more strict concerning the Jewish law than Peter was. Peter was quite happy to eat with the Gentiles when he was at Antioch until he saw some that came from James and then he was worried and he separated himself. But now it's James, the one that seems to be even more strict in his application of Jewish principles. He's the one who stands up and says in the 19th verse, Wherefore my sentence

is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God, but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols and from fornication, and from things strangles. And from blood. In other words, the James says we cannot call upon them to keep the law, but simply to observe the general moral principles that apply throughout the whole word of God.

And the result was that God in His grace, in his grace beloved young people, met an effort by the enemy to divide the Saints of God. And the result was righteousness, a decision that was in accordance with the Word of God, and peace between 2 assemblies, A Gentile assembly. And a Jewish assembly. This assembly that decided. But they should act in this way. Found. That God was able. To work that which was for His glory. And for the blessing of His people. Now in the 4th chapter of Ephesians. We find there, if we could go back to it for a moment. But it says with all loneliness. And meekness. With long-suffering forbearing one another in love. I'm sure there aren't any of us, certainly not the speaker, who speaks on such a subject as this without feeling how far short we come in the exercise of these principles. But the word of God says with all loneliness and meekness. Now, if we were to turn over to the 11th chapter of Matthew. We would find there that it speaks concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And says for I am meek and lowly in heart. Now the Lord Jesus in his pathway here was meek. He did not give offense. And he was lowly. In that he did not take offense in spite of some of the terrible things that were said concerning him. When we come over to Ephesians chapter 4. We have before us the subject of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. And here it speaks of loneliness first. And meekness afterwards. I would like to suggest to you this afternoon one reason why it is given in this way. Brethren, we have seen. To our sorrow. Felt the reaction in our own hearts, I'm sure. That things are done. Or said. And the result is that my heart. My old nature reacts. To what is said or what is done? It takes exception. It rebels. And the loneliness is not seen. In other words, I take offense. I'm offended by what brother so and so said or did. And the result then is that the response that is seen is not one of meekness. It's not that which is to be expected from a child of God. If I am not lowly. I'm going to take offense and the result is I'm not going to meet be meek, but I'm going to respond in kind. And give offence. And the result will be.

That there will not be the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We find, the word of God says, forbearing one another in love. All beloved brethren, we've had a little bit of this in the meetings this last few days. About that love being in exercise amongst us. That the world even may recognize that we are his disciples. But that the machinery. The assembly might be kept running smoothly. That there might not only be seen simply the righteousness. But also the peace, not just the truth, but also the mercy. Now, beloved brethren, at the cross. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mercy was displayed and truth was not sacrificed in any way. Righteousness was maintained, but peace was procured. And beloved brethren, I submit to you and I submit to my own heart, that God has put this pattern for us in His Word to give us to see the exercise that there should be on your part and on mine to, as it were, sit down and take stock as to whether we are endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. In the bond of peace. It is not a matter of me simply as it were, sitting in my local assembly and saying we can decide it here and everyone else is going to have to bow to it. Beloved brethren, the Word of God is very clear. Whatsoever is bound on earth is bound in heaven. But at the same time, the word of God establishes a pattern for me. For you to see that which is becoming that which he looks to see in those who are endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Law, forbearance, long-suffering. Loneliness, meekness. I believe we see it all in that assembly at Antioch that would grow up, make that long journey just to ensure that Satan was not to be allowed to divide the Saints of God. Now I would add a further word of caution. It is the unity of the Spirit. Consequently, it cannot be unity at the expense of truth. It cannot be unity at the expense of righteousness. But, beloved brethren, it is possible to have righteousness and peace. It is possible to have mercy and truth. There is one body stands. Thank God we have nothing to do with keeping the unity of the body. But we are called upon to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. And beloved brethren, I suggest to you and I suggest to myself, it requires positive exercise. Not a matter of simply drifting, but a positive exercise to realize, as it were, that here I am sitting down in my local assembly and facing a decision, and to bear in mind that what we are about to do is going to affect all those who are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And how? How can we without insisting on our rights as an assembly? Without insisting on our status in any way, but with loneliness and meekness, doing everything that is possible, consistent with truth and righteousness, that will keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Now, if our time is just about gone, if you'll go back to the 15th of Acts for just a moment, I believe there are.

Two other matters that I would like to draw your attention to. You notice it says in the 15th of Acts and the. 22nd verse Then pleased that the apostles and elders with the whole church. To send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas surname bar Sabus, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. And they wrote letters by them after this banner, and simply goes on to confirm what had already been said. Now if you go on to the 27th verse, it says We have, We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. We find beloved brethren again. That they would commit to this assembly at Antioch in writing their decision, and they were very thankful to get it. But at the same time, they said we're going to send some of our company to make that long journey all the way back up there to Antioch to let those beloved brethren and up there have it confirmed. That what we're saying here in the letter is really and truly the expression of our hearts that they might have it confirmed by word of mouth. All beloved brethren, is it not a joy to the heart to see this care, this love in exercise that would send these ones on this journey simply to confirm what was already a gracious answer in a letter could load again in the 15th chapter of Acts and the. 32nd Verse. And Judith and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words. And confirm them, Not only did these two make this long journey back to Antioch, but God overruled in His grace and brought even further blessing out of it, that from that very place where those ones had come from, that brought the error, brought the evil teaching in, in the 1st place, from that very same place should come those who would build up the Saints. Confirm them. And the path of the truth. All, beloved brethren, God is able. God is able where we look to Him, and where there is the meekness, the loneliness first, the meekness that doesn't insist in any way upon our rights, but looks to Him. Now I would like to just read two other verses if you take the time to turn over to James chapter 3 for a moment. James Chapter 3. And verse 17. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Beloved brethren, we see here, I trust we've mentioned it a number of times this afternoon already. But I would like to repeat it. The wisdom that is from above is first pure. Consequently, the mercy cannot be at the expense of truth, but righteousness and peace can kiss each other pure than peaceable. Gentle, easy to be entreated. Oh, that's what they found there at Antioch. They were ready to go all the way up to Jerusalem, and when they got to Jerusalem, they found their brethren that were ready to listen. Ready to help, and in the fear of God together render a decision that would be for the glory of God and that would maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Brethren, let us not give up the purity. But, beloved Saints of God, may we never, never, never. Abandoned. The peace. The gentleness, the easiness to be entreated. One other verse I would like to read is in 13th chapter of Hebrews.

Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 7. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever. Beloved young people, there are many beloved brethren who have ministered to us the truth of God, and they have gone on. They have gone on to glory. Even these ones that were involved back here in the 15th chapter of Acts going on to glory now, the word of God says imitate their faith.

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