

522 Circles and Hexagons

In last week's Reflection, "A Fair Day's Pay", we were reminded of the need for all of us to understand each other's situation, no matter what may be the issue, as a crucial first step towards resolving the problems that have arisen.

In Galatians Chapter 6 we read, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (6.2, KJV) – an expression of the same truth as above, albeit in a specifically Christian context here. We are to "look out" for one another, giving meaningful support where there is need, perhaps with our time, prayers, money and practical support. In verse 1 is an example of this burden-bearing – "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted".

Now in practice this "restoring" can be tricky! It is simplest to say and do nothing, with that Cain-like attitude of "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4.9); and it is probably quite simple to go to the other extreme, blasting into the situation with Scripture-based, self-righteous guns blazing! The unfortunate, fault-ridden target of those guns is likely to reject such a strident approach with a few choice words of his or her own, with the door towards restoration thus being slammed firmly shut.

So a more sensitive approach is required, which involves that spiritual maturity and "spirit of meekness" mentioned in Galatians 6.1. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, then explains the matter further: "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work ..." (from 6.3-4a). The Greek word translated as "prove" here in the KJV is all about testing, checking, self-examining, which reminds us of the Lord Jesus' words on this same point – sort out "the beam" in your own eye before attempting to help remove "the mote" in your brother's eye (from Matthew 6.1-5). In Romans 12 we read that every man is "not to think of [himself] more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (v.3).

Our Christian walk is thus one of triple responsibilities – to the Lord God Himself through Christ, to one another, and to self, and how easy it is for Self to come first, choosing as it were the best seat in that "highest room" of Jesus' parable about the wedding guests, which ends – "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14.7-11). This was a lesson which

“James and John, the sons of Zebedee” were slow to grasp, for they boldly asked Jesus to give them the seats either side of Him “in thy glory”. Not surprisingly their colleagues took exception to these two brothers over their Self-first request, and Jesus explained that “the chiefest” is to be the “servant of all” – just as His own example so clearly demonstrates (Mark 10.35-45).

These basic truths about our sensitively caring for one another can be simply expressed by our picturing a series of one-inch-diameter circles entirely filling up an A4 page, with no spaces left between the circles. Each circle thus has its own place on the page, but inevitably each one partly overlaps its neighbours, and in turn is partly overlapped by its neighbours. Now if each circle represents a person, wherever the circles partly overlap each other there is likely to be competition and friction between the persons involved: the scene is a breeding ground for a James-and-John type of Me-First jostle!

But scripturally things quickly change when each circle is changed to become a hexagon. Now, (as their Creator caused the bees to demonstrate so wonderfully!), there are still no gaps on that page, but neither now is there any overlapping: each person has their own place and space, and no person spills over into the space and place of their neighbours. To come back to Galatians Chapter 6, each hexagon-minded person is thus able to “bear his own burden” (v.5), and also to “bear one another’s burdens” (v.2), with competition and friction having been removed. Each person can now play their part, using their gifts for the well-being of the other “hexagons”, their fellow-members of “the body of Christ” (from I Corinthians 12.12-31). This shared “hexagon attitude” fosters mutual recognition and respect, for the well-being of all concerned, and for the effective ministry of this part of Christ’s Church, in which the Holy Spirit’s spiritual gifts and beautiful fruit will surely be apparent – I Corinthians 12.4-11 and Galatians 5.22-26.

This is the ideal for a local Christian fellowship, not always attained of course because, even though the Lord has graciously entrusted us with His extraordinary Gospel treasures, we remain “earthen vessels” rather than priceless porcelain jars! And why is this? - “that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (II Corinthians 4.5-7).

Meanwhile Jesus quietly tells us, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15.12).