



# RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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*Paul and Gretel Haglin*

EVANGELIZING THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

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## Letters of Faith

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**“So the church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was edified [growing in wisdom, virtue, and piety] and walking in the respect and reverential fear of the Lord and in the consolation and exhortation of the Holy Spirit continued to increase and was multiplied.”**

Acts 9:31 AMPC

Dearly Beloved,

We all long to see a real increase in the numbers of committed Christians all over the world. Every Christian magazine we receive, from both Great Britain and the United States, is brimming with advertisements for “Church Growth” conferences and in-depth book reviews of this month’s new book on “How To Build a Bigger Church.” This subject draws ministers and their leadership like bees to honey. If there is a surefire method to enlarge the number of our members, it seems that we all want to be in on it.

It is easy to get desperate as we try harder and harder to “win” more people to Christ. We can find ourselves beginning to push and press; to argue and wrangle; to wheedle and manipulate our “prey” into a profession of our brand of faith. The trouble is, this kind of evangelism can stir up animosity instead of faith in Jesus. No one likes to be coerced into anything. Some people pacify these over-eager evangelists who buttonhole them on the street, at a sporting event, or on the job, by quickly repeating the sinner’s prayer, word for word and line for line, and promising to be in church on Sunday. They then disappear!

If we are not being led by the Holy Spirit to witness to a “ripe” (ready to harvest) person, we are liable to “pluck” him or her too soon and end up with only green, sour, bitter, or hardened produce in our church basket!

Having said all that, let’s look at the above passage again.

The newly converted Paul was “on fire” for the Lord. He turned his unrelenting zeal with which he had previously persecuted Christians into trying to persuade his fellow Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Paul was pushing his intended converts a little too enthusiastically, for Acts 9:23-25 NASB records: **“And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, but their plot became known to Saul. And they were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.”**

He then went to Jerusalem and tried to associate with the disciples there whom he had once persecuted and found them afraid of him until Barnabas, “the son of encouragement,” stood up for him and persuaded the apostles and the rest of the disciples that his conversion was genuine and that his miraculous calling was real.

In no time at all, **“...he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.”** (Acts 9:29) He wasn't content to just tell them the good news, but in unbridled passion he began to press his points into a debate—which sparked fierce opposition.

Acts 9:30 records that, **“...when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.”** After the brethren sent Paul out of harm's way to Tarsus, Luke wrote, **“So the church... enjoyed peace...”** (Acts 9:31)

Paul spent the next few years under the Holy Spirit's tutelage, learning about the “otherwiseness” of Jesus Christ. Then Jesus Himself appeared to him and fully revealed His heart and Spirit to him. **“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”** (Gal. 1:11–12)

Because the zealous neophyte firebrand Paul was removed, peace prevailed in the church! We sensed that the Lord was saying to us: *“I am more interested in the attitude, behavior, and genuine love that resides in you and flows through you who name My name than a ‘trophy case’ full of converts.”*

Paul believed, absorbed, and practiced the valuable lessons revealed to him in his wilderness experience by the Holy Spirit and by Jesus Christ Himself. He learned to humble himself, to receive the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, to obey the discernment the Lord was giving him, and not to always rush in “where angels fear to tread!” His heart and emotions had been tenderized by his time alone with Jesus in the desert after his two abortive starts where he had to be restrained from bringing harm to himself and to the budding church. Remember, Moses was headstrong too, and had to be removed from his self-ordained ministry until he could learn to be meek and submit his will and natural drive to God. He also had to learn to wait obediently for God's commands before he moved or spoke in His name.

By the grace of the Lord, the Apostle Paul came under the yoke of his beloved Jesus and no longer was driven to pressure people to believe as he did. Listen to his wise advice to Timothy on using self-control, discernment, and wisdom to prevent dissension: Pray for **“...all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** (1 Timothy 2:2-4) **“...solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless, and leads to the ruin of the hearers.”** (2 Timothy 2:14) **“...the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all...with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition...”** (2 Timothy 2:24-25) **“...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”** (2 Timothy 4:2)

Interestingly, the Apostle Peter said in Acts 10:28 after his astounding roof-top experience with the Lord, **“...God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.”** His whole attitude towards the Gentiles underwent a startling change just as Paul's mindset was dramatically changed when he was overcome with the bright light of The Truth and Love on the road to Damascus.

No longer are we to categorize people into classes according to our old traditions, or judgmental prejudices, or our high opinion of our knowledge and application of Scriptures to every situation.

No longer are we to brush aside the counsel of loving and seasoned friends who are trying to

stop us from alienating fellow saints with our stubborn refusal to humbly submit our plans, actions, and head-knowledge of Scriptures to the Holy Spirit.

No longer are we to cut off relationships with those whom we disagree about some minor points of Christian tenets and so be responsible for disturbing the peace and unity which the Lord wants amongst His Saints.

God is serious when He calls us to walk in love with each other in order to show the world that He does exist and sent His Son, Jesus, the Messiah.

We do not want to have to be shipped off to some wilderness to learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading or alert to a person's receptivity to our understandings. Nor do we want to be a source of stumbling because of our discourtesy to those who have not yet come to fully understand the Good News. Equally troubling would be to cause pain to someone who is eventually proven to have had a fuller understanding of God's heart than we had. It grieves us to think that we might be so intent on accomplishing our own agenda, or proving our own point, that we might miss out on participating in God's final plan.

If we truly want the 21st Century church to increase, and continue to increase by His astounding multiplication, it would behoove us fervent believers to become an integral part of building a bond of peace between brothers and sisters of different persuasions of Christianity. Through the cross and the person of Jesus Christ, we can by God's grace, be changed, built up in the truth, and encouraged by the Holy Spirit to partake together in the final harvest of God for His glory.

**“I...entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**  
(Ephesians 4:1-3) Join me in praying: *Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, I pray that Your peace in me will flow through my words, my actions, and my countenance to bless and calm and pacify all those to whom You send me. Grace me to display Your love, Your patience, and Your forbearance wherever I go and in whatever I do, because apart from You, Jesus, there is no peace in this world! Please, Lord, use me to spread Your peace in my family and in Your family, the Church. Amen.*

Hugs in the Bonds of Peace,

