

Overcoming Inequality

Taffi Dollar

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Scripture References

Galatians 3:28, 29, MSG

Genesis 3:16

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

2 Corinthians 5:16-21, AMPC

Romans 6:14

Matthew 20:25, 26

1 Corinthians 12:12-23, MSG

Philemon 1:1, 8-10

Philemon 1:10-17, AMPC

Summary

We are living in a time of strife and division, in which inequality between race, gender, and social and economic status is present. This is because the world does not know Jesus Christ, who enables believers to share a common relationship of equality. The enemy has worked hard to divide people by enforcing a spirit of inferiority or superiority; however, in Christ, we are all equal. The curse of the spirit of division originated in the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned, but Jesus removed this curse by shedding His blood on the cross. Because of what He did, the war over equality has been won. In light of this, Christians can now operate in a stance of victory and demonstrate the equality that has been made available to everyone. A personal relationship with Jesus brings us together and puts us all on equal ground.

A. Being born again makes us new creatures in Christ and erases our differences.

1. In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ's family, then you are Abraham's famous "descendant," heirs according to the covenant promises (Galatians 3:28, 29, MSG).
 - a. Any family divided against itself can only function in a limited capacity. The enemy dwells in division and strife.
 - b. The church is the body of Christ; we must view each other in light of God's Word.
 - c. Paul was referring to the common relationship believers have with one another. Before Christ came, there was no such relationship.
 - d. The inequality we see in the world today is the result of the enemy entering into the garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve's sin. The spirit of division was born here; part of the curse was man's domination over woman (Genesis 3:16).
 - e. When God is present, mercy and favor show up, regardless of the situation.
2. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not

- imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Corinthians 5:14-21).
- a. Inferiority is a persistent sense of inadequacy, and a feeling of being powerless, small, or unimportant, as if we fall short. Jesus redeemed us from this.
 - b. Jesus lived during a time of great inequality. This was documented by the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman with the alabaster box who ministered to Jesus, the blind man He encountered, and the lame man who was unable to get into the healing pool by himself.
 - c. Seeing someone "after the flesh" is seeing them according to their race, ethnicity, gender, or economic status. We should not see others according to external things.
3. Consequently, from now on we estimate *and* regard no one from a [purely] human point of view [in terms of natural standards of value]. [No] even though we once did estimate Christ from a human viewpoint *and* as a man, yet now [we have such knowledge of Him that] we know Him no longer [in terms of the flesh]. Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh *and* new has come! But all things are from God, Who through *Jesus* Christ reconciled us to Himself [received us into favor, brought us into harmony with Himself] and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation [that by word and deed we might aim to bring others into harmony with Him]. It was God [personally present] in Christ, reconciling *and* restoring the world to favor with Himself, not counting up *and* holding against [men] their trespasses [but cancelling them], and committing to us the message of reconciliation (of the restoration to favor). So we are Christ's ambassadors, God making His appeal as it were through us. We [as Christ's personal representatives] beg you for His sake to lay hold of the divine favor [now offered you] *and* be reconciled to God. For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in *and* through Him we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness] (2 Corinthians 5:16-21, *AMPC*)
- a. To know someone after the flesh is to estimate and regard them from a human point of view, in the natural realm. We must not regard others according to the world's view.
 - b. During Jesus' earthly ministry, many saw Him only as the son of a Jewish carpenter, in the physical realm. However, because of what He did, we no longer see Him that way.
 - c. We do not need an earthly go-between to have a relationship with God; Jesus allows us to go straight to God.
 - d. Being born again makes us new and gets rid of the old law of domination. Sin no longer dominates us, because we are no longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).
 - e. Jesus warned His disciples not to dominate others (Matthew 20:25, 26). We are to see others as God sees them.

B. Our differences should not divide us. As members of one body, we are all equal.

1. You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. By means of

his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which *he* has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive. I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, limpid and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it. But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a *part* of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn't be a body, but a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, "Get lost; I don't need you"? Or, Head telling Foot, "You're fired; your job has been phased out"? As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way—the "lower" the part, the more basic, and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. When it's a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes *no* difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons (1 Corinthians 12:12-23, MSG).

- a. Paul compared the church as the body of Christ to the human body. Each and every part is interconnected and needs the other parts in order to function correctly.
 - b. Each body part is different, but still significant and necessary. Each one has an important job to do; they are all connected to one body. No individual body part can operate on its own; it needs all the other body parts.
 - c. People did not understand why Jesus ministered to those they did not consider necessary or important; however, He deliberately spent a great deal of time with them. He came to give dignity to *everyone*.
2. Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer...Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds (Philemon 1:1, 8-10).
 - a. Paul considered Onesimus, a slave, just as vital and important to the body of Christ as everyone else.
 3. I appeal to you for my [own spiritual] child, Onesimus [meaning profitable], whom I have begotten [in the faith] while a captive in these chains. Once he was unprofitable to you, but now he is indeed profitable to you as well as to me. I am sending him back to you in his own person, [and it is like sending] my very heart. I would have chosen to keep him with me, in order that he might minister to my needs in your stead during my imprisonment for the Gospel's sake. But it has been my wish to do nothing about it without first consulting you *and* getting your consent, in order that your benevolence might not seem to be the

result of compulsion *or* of pressure but might be voluntary [on your part]. Perhaps it was for this reason that he was separated [from you] for a while, that you might have him back as yours forever, Not as a slave any longer but as [something] more than a slave, as a brother [Christian], especially dear to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh [as a servant] and in the Lord [as a fellow believer]. If then you consider me a partner *and* a comrade in fellowship, welcome *and* receive him as you would [welcome and receive] me (Philemon 1:10-17, *AMPC*).

- a. Paul had a revelation of grace and of the family of God. He gave dignity to Onesimus by referring to him as a son.
- b. Onesimus' status changed from being a slave, outside of and apart from the privileges of fellowship with Christ, to being a spiritual brother in the body of Christ.

For more on how being in Christ puts us all on equal footing and eliminates divisions among us, click on the link below for the DVD, *Overcoming Inequality*.

<https://bit.ly/OvercomingInequalityDVD>

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