

# Beware of Vesuvius

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,  
if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit,  
if any tenderness and compassion,  
then make my joy complete by being like-minded,  
having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”

Philippians 2:1-2 (NIV)

**M**ount Vesuvius in Italy is best known for its eruption in A.D. 79 and the consequent destruction of two Roman cities. It is regarded as the most dangerous active volcano in the world. Several million people now live within reach of its lethal capabilities.

When we think of the destructive forces of such a mountain we shudder. Why would people repopulate the area around such a dreadful mountain which had killed many thousands of people over the centuries. Signs ought to be posted all around the area reading, Beware of Vesuvius.

During the years of pastoral ministry I have come in contact with Christian people whose emotional lives resemble Vesuvius. They are calm and reasonable for months or even a few years and then suddenly, with only small warning signs, they erupt in a dreadful display of destructive passion.

The pastoral side of Paul shines through clearly as he

calls on his readers to remember how they have been united together in Christ and of their mutual responsibility to work for peace among themselves. Later in his letter he will mention two people at odds with each other but here he cautions everyone against pent up anger that threatens the unity of the church for which Christ died.

Paul reminds the believers that they are united to Christ, they all share in His love and the Spirit, they all have experienced the tenderness and compassion of the Gospel message and so he calls on them to be united. I believe that many confessing Christian people need to consider that the “grudge” they bear toward another member of the body of Christ ought to be dismissed.

Pastors in most, if not every congregation, need to ensure that their flock is of the same mind in Christ. Petty differences need to be quickly dealt with lest they suddenly explode into a church split. Members of the body of Christ making war against

other members over such things as an alleged slight, the color of the new sanctuary drapes or another matter that will be forgotten 5 seconds into eternity.

If you have been the object of rejection by other believers take to heart the instruction in Matthew 18 on reconciliation. Seek to institute the teaching in that passage. Read Romans 12:18 where we are called on to use all our efforts to live peacefully with everyone. Go back to the person who is at war with you and use your best efforts to reconcile.

Also, Beware of Vesuvius within your own heart. Seek to cultivate the same tenderness and compassion toward the one who has offended you as Jesus has shown you. Anger unresolved can suddenly erupt in your own speech and cause a serious breach in the harmony of the family of God.

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