**Christianity and Patriotism**

One of the spiritual tragedies of this pandemic has been the apparent willingness of Christians to demean and berate one another. Some consider their brethren “sheeple” who’ve allowed fear to dominate their faith. Others regard their brethren as selfish, lacking at least compassion if not love for one another. The result has been casting of dispersions on the either the patriotism or the faithfulness and spirituality of their brethren with whom they disagree. To borrow from James 3:10, *“My brethren, things ought not be this way.”*

“Yes,” we can be overly concerned disease and death. Unless the Lord returns first, we are all going to die sometime of something. If *“the fear of death”* dominates and paralyzes our spiritual lives and existence, we’re probably lacking faith since we’re supposed to have been delivered from such, Hebrews 2:15. But if on the other hand we become so patriotically insistent upon our personal rights and liberties that we act from *“selfishness or empty conceit”* and fail to *“with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves,”* we’re just as wrong, cf. Philippians 2:3. Surely we can do better! How so? Here are a few suggestions.

**Don’t assign motives to others’ actions.** We seldom know “the whole story” of why others do what they do, don’t do what they don’t do. So stop assigning motives.

**Don’t impugn the actions or motives of others.** Sometimes we’re apparently not content to assume we understand another’s motives, we then proceed to place the worst possible construction on them. Stop impugning motives.

**Mind your own business.** Unless true “sin” (a violation of a Book, Chapter, and Verse) is involved, then Romans 14 says:

* Don’t *regard one another with contempt,* v.3;
* Don’t *judge one another,* vv.4,10,13a;
* Be *fully convinced in your own mind,* vv.5,22, and let others do likewise; for…
* God (is *the* and) *will judge,* v.12;
* Don’t put *obstacles in one another’s way,* v.13b;
* *Walk in love* and don’t *let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil,* vv.14-15;
* *Pursue the things that make for peace* and the *building up* (rather than the *tearing down*) *of one another,* v.19;
* Don’t *tear down the work of God* for the sake of your *rights,* v.20;
* Don’t *do anything* to cause *your brother to stumble,* v.21; and,
* Always act *in faith,* v.23.

Paul highlights to the Corinthians that *“love”-* both in essence and practice, is *patient, kind, not jealous, does not brag* and *is not arrogant;* it does *not act unbecomingly* or *seek its own* (way); it is *not easily provoked* and *does not take into account a wrong suffered;* it *does not rejoice in unrighteousness* but *rejoices with the truth;* it *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,* and *endures all things;* it *never fails.*  If we fail to *“love one another”* in these ways, we will *“turn (y)our freedom into an opportunity for the flesh,”* and will do exactly what we are doing… *“bite and devour one another”* and being *“consumed by one another,”* cf. Galatian 5:13,15. In the words of Hebrews 6:9, *“But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.”*  Let’s do better, brethren! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)