

Speaking to the soul



Quarrelsome people

A quarrelsome wife is as annoying as constant dripping on a rainy day. Stopping her complaints is like trying to stop the wind or trying to hold something with greased hands. Proverbs 27:15-16

I'm not going to defend the pure sexism of this proverb. There's absolutely no need for it. Anyone can be quarrelsome, whatever their gender! The writer is convinced that the quarrelsome person is very hard to stop. He makes it sound as if quarrelling has become their way of life. No amount of challenging will change them. Clearly, quarrelling is something that has happened since the dawn of time, and it's not surprising that the apostle Paul was fully aware of the problem. He instructed Timothy that "a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach and be patient with difficult people" (2 Timothy 2:24).

The sad truth, of course, is that any of us can be quarrelsome. It may be that we're not feeling well, or we are generally unhappy with the state of things or we are feeling threatened by life. Paul gives sound advice that, instead of quarrelling, we should seek to be kind and patient. Quarrelling with people is never kind. It causes anxiety and undermines relationships. The kind person is always looking to show love and care to people and to be sensitive to their needs. Such a person will always seek to be patient. Patience is always much more easily said than done, but Paul knew how vital it was in responding to difficult people with whom, it would seem, the Church has always been generously supplied.

If you are finding someone particularly difficult at present, it is, perhaps, comforting to know that the Bible is familiar with your dilemma. Even more importantly, it is wonderful to hear that God knows the whole situation and will give us the grace and strength to cope if we ask him to.

QUESTION

How have you found it best to cope with quarrelsome people?

PRAYER

Lord God, I ask you to help me to be wise and gracious in my relationships with other people, especially those whom I find most difficult. Amen

