

BRETHREN DWELLING TOGETHER IN UNITY

Psa. 133: 1- 3

Sermon by Donald Townsley

INTRODUCTION

1. Talk about the text.
2. In this lesson on UNITY we have reference solely to the unity in a local congregation.
3. UNITY finds its greatest and most direct obligation in the fellowship of the local church.
4. It is in the local congregation where division and strife is often found:
 - (1) In the Corinthian church -- I Cor. 3:3; 1: 10 -13
 - (2) Strife has no place among brethren -- Gen. 13:7 - 9; James 3: 14 - 18.
5. This lesson is to prevent strife.

I. TWO TERMS THAT NEED OUR STUDY -- *UNITY AND UNION*

1. Many brethren have mistaken UNION for Bible UNITY.
2. UNITY is the state or condition of being ONE -- ONENESS -- Acts 4: 32; John 17:11, 20 - 21.
3. UNION: A number of antagonistic elements may be brought together into a combination or union so far as outward appearances go, and may have the appearance of unity, while all elements of division exist:
 - (1) Example: Labor unions; denominations.
4. UNION is opposed to UNITY for the following reasons:
 - (1) UNITY means to dwell together WITHOUT differences -- I Cor. 1:10; Acts 4:32
 1. UNION seeks dwelling together despite differences.
 - (2) UNITY comes by individuals accepting the Word of God -- John 17: 20 - 21; Phil. 3:16; Eph. 4: 1 - 6.
 1. UNION may be had by agreement to get along.
 - (3) UNITY prohibits division -- I Cor. 1: 10; Eph. 4: 1 - 6.
 1. UNION admits division and thus encourages it.
 - (4) UNITY can only be had by the removal or destruction of error -- Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10; 2 John 9 - 11; Eph. 5:11; II Cor. 6: 14 - 17.
 1. UNION opens the floodgates for all manner of errors.
 - (5) UNITY fulfills the Word of God -- John 17: 20 - 21; Gal. 6:2.
 1. UNION makes consciences, feelings, and sincerity the standard of authority instead of the Word of God -- Lev. 10: 3, 6.
 - (6) UNITY is had by doing the will of God -- John 17: 20 - 21.
 1. UNION is had by compromising convictions and disregarding differences -- Gal. 2:5.
 - (7) UNITY eliminates error -- Eph. 5: 11; 2 John 9 - 11; I Tim. 1:3.
 1. UNION is a puny effort to patch up the damage caused by error without removing the cause (unity-in-diversity).
 - (8) The Word of God is the foundation of UNITY -- John 17: 20 -21; 2 Cor. 5:7.
 1. Liberty of OPINION is the foundation of religious UNION.
5. Let all of us be alert to the differences between religious UNION and Bible UNITY.

II. EVILS OF DIVISION IN A CONGREGATION

1. Division in a local congregation is very unpleasant.

- (1) Our text in Psalms 133:1 shows disunity is an unpleasant thing.
 - (2) Anyone who has ever been a member of a congregation where the factious spirit existed will testify to its unpleasantness.
 - (3) At times the factious spirit in a congregation manifests itself in the home, and in social and business affairs of the members of the congregation.
2. Division hinders progress.
 - (1) A church in confusion and strife cannot hope to do very much in converting their neighbors.
 - (2) Such conditions stops the ears of the people against any plea the church makes.
 - (3) The church, by its strife, contributes to the damnation of those it should save.
 3. Division leads to sins of all sorts -- Gal. 5:15; James 3: 14 - 16.
 - (1) To consume one another is to destroy one another's Christian character by unholy wrangling.
 4. Division's effects on members of the church:
 - (1) Those who are not a party to the division are disturbed in their church relationship, discouraged, and frequently they become inactive -- at times drifting away from the church.
 - (2) Those who are responsible destroy him for whom Christ died.
 5. Division drives Christ out.
 - (1) If by the factious spirit one member is driven out of the congregation, Christ is thereby driven out -- Matt. 25:40.

III. UNITY IS POSSIBLE ONLY WHEN:

1. It is desired.
 - (1) One wonders sometimes whether some congregations want unity.
 - (2) It seems that some members delight in a turmoil.
 - (3) Eph. 4:1 - 3
2. Definite program of work is adopted.
3. The Bible is our guide.
 - (1) Should there be unity on any other basis than the Bible, it would not be unity of the Spirit.
4. Jesus is recognized as Head -- Eph. 1: 22 - 23.
5. Self is denied -- Rom. 15:2; Rom. 12:10; Luke 9:23; Phil. 2: 3 - 5.

CONCLUSION

1. I hope these thoughts will help us all to do better.

Preached at Underwood Hts., Jan. 4, 1976