

# **"ENDEAVORING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE"**

## **Ephesians 4: 1 - 3**

Introduction:

1. I want to speak on Eph. 4:3 as a subject.
2. We could also call this lesson the CAUSE and CURE of division in the church.
3. I can think of no more important subject to be studied by members of the church than this one.
4. The sin of division among the people of God has always been one of the great hindrances to the cause of Christ.
5. God's people have had this sin among them almost from the beginning of the church.
6. The church at Corinth had division -- I Cor. 1: 10 -13; 3: 1 - 6; 11:18
  - (1) Paul said, "*there must be also factions (parties or heresies) among you*" ...I Cor. 11:19
  - (2) John writes of some apostatizing from the faith -- I John 2:19
  - (3) There was division where Diotrephes was a member -- III John 9 -10
  - (4) Paul said some would "*depart from the faith*"...I Tim. 4: 1 - 3
  - (5) Antioch had some trouble over circumcision -- Acts 15: 1 - 2

### I. WHAT USUALLY CAUSES DIVISION AMONG THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST?

1. Strife and factional motives: Phil. 2:3; James 3: 14, 16; Gal. 5: 20
2. The word "Faction" -- denotes ambition, self-seeking, rivalry, self-will being an underlying idea in the word; hence it denotes party-making". *Vine*, Vol. II, page 68
  - (1) *Thayer* says that "in the New Testament a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts; partisanship, factiousness: Page 249
3. R. L. Whiteside describes a factious man: "*A factious man, or a heretic is a man who stirs up a faction or adheres to a faction. The factious man may offer any number of excuses for his actions, but selfishness is at the bottom of it... The more time he has the more trouble he will make. He is the sort of man who canvases the membership, misrepresents matters, pretends great devotion, gets the members to sign petitions and documents, with the sole design to carry a point. (Fire the preacher or the elders). He will fill others with the same spirit; and as he proceeds he becomes more and more unreliable in his statements.*"
4. The greatest source of Factionalism is in the words of *Thayer*: "a desire to put one's self forward".
  - (1) The human ambition -- a desire to be recognized as outstanding -- has led many to actions that make parties or factions.

5. I think you can see that the matter of motive is of great importance in what we do as service to God. Phil. 2:3
6. It is possible to do the very things God commands to be done, and yet do them with an end or motive in view that destroys the value of what we do to such an extent that God will not accept the service -- Phil. 1:15
7. Churches can work through strife with factional intent.
8. Churches and preachers that do not labor purely for the sake of truth and the salvation of souls, although they may preach the truth in the pulpit, but outside work for innovations and factions, are disobeying the word of God and are jeopardizing their own standing in the sight of the Lord.
9. PRIDE is one of the greatest causes of division.

(1) The Pride of Knowledge (Brother know-it-all) -- I Cor. 8: 1

- a. He knows who is right and who is wrong.
- b. He knows what has to be done and how to do it.
- c. He knows better than God what the organization of the church should be like.
- d. His wisdom is far superior to Deity in fixing the qualifications of the elders and deacons.

(2) Pride of power.

- a. He must be at the head of all that is done.
- b. He wants all to ask him "is it alright?" before they do it.

(3) Pride of place or position.

- a. He is a man who has it made.
- b. He has proven his superiority in many fields.
- c. He is recognized as a leading citizen, and accomplished in his field, so he should be recognized in all fields.
- d. Because of his "position", all men should follow him, but usually he succeeds only in causing "schisms" in the congregation.
- e. The larger the Schism, the larger becomes his egotism.

(4) It takes foolish followers and proud leaders to make a division in the church.

10. CARNALITY causes division -- I Cor. 3: 1 - 6

(1) How can a church know it is made up of carnal members?

1. If they are filled with jealousy and strife all the time, you can know they are carnal.
2. If they always want their own selfish way, they are to be labeled carnal.
3. If they have a chip on their shoulder and always in a fuss, they are carnal.

4. If they are producing the fruits of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19 - 21), they are carnal.
5. If they are unable to assimilate strong meat and always are griping about the preaching, they are carnal.

~Donald Townsley

(Underwood Heights 1970; Radio 1970)