

"ENDEAVORING THE KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE"

Ephesians 4: 1 - 3

Introduction:

1. Discord and division in the body of Christ are sinful, and wherever either exists among believers somebody is guilty and must repent of that sin or perish -- Prov. 6: 16 - 19
2. That division does exist among many brethren, and in many places, is an undeniable fact.
3. So, we need to study the causes of division.

I. PERSONAL MATTERS

1. Disturbances between two or more brethren over business affairs, or over other personal matters in no way related to the affairs of the church, are frequently carried to such an extent as to practically involve the entire congregation.
2. Brethren will take sides in such matters and disrupt the church.
3. How personal matters are to be settled -- Matt. 18: 15 - 17

II. SELF-JUSTIFICATION

1. It is difficult for some to admit wrong.
2. A position is taken, wrong words are uttered, or improper acts performed, and rather than confess the error and change the life, one begins to justify himself-- Luke 10:29
3. When we do wrong, we need to have the spirit of the prodigal son who came home and said, "*I have sinned*".

III. THE MOB SPIRIT

1. One person can become dissatisfied over something and begin to talk and stir until a great number have joined the mob having no understanding what it is all about.
2. Acts 19 -- we read where Demetrius stirred up the mob spirit over Paul's preaching against idolatry -- Acts 19: 24 - 32
3. There is no reasoning with the "mob spirit".
4. People with the "mob spirit" act just like stampeded cattle.

IV. IGNORANCE

1. Some congregational disruptions come about because of ignorance of what the Bible teaches.
2. Jesus said those baptized were to be taught "*to observe all things*" He had commanded -- Matt. 28:20

V. INACTIVITY

1. In every congregation there is a certain amount of vitality which must, and will, find expression in some way.

2. Inactivity promotes discontentment and this spirit of discontent grows into a spirit of unrest and dissatisfaction with each other.
3. Nagging develops, ill feelings are generated, and strife is the inevitable result.
4. If the members of the church do not have something else to fight, they will fight among themselves.

VI. RULE OF OPINION

1. Christianity is essentially a religion of faith -- II Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11: 6; Rom. 10:17
2. Faith is the basis of all acceptable obedience to God.
3. Any act of work or worship based on opinion is sin.
4. Many churches have been divided over the rule of opinion.

VII. PEEVISHNESS

1. Being easily provoked -- love will not allow such a disposition -- I Cor. 13: 5

VIII. EVILS OF DIVISION IN A CONGREGATION

1. Its unpleasantness

- (1) Psalms 133: 1 shows disunity is unpleasant.
- (2) Anyone who has ever been a member of a congregation where the factious spirit exists 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 members of the congregation.

2. Hinders progress

- (1) A church in confusion and strife cannot hope to do very much in converting their neighbors.
- (2) Such conditions stop the ears of the people against any plea the church makes -- Matt. 23:13
- (3) The church, by its strife, contributes to the damnation of those it should save.

3. Leads to sins of all sorts.

- (1) James 3: 14 - 16; Gal. 5: 15

4. Effects on members

- (1) Those who are not involved are discouraged and frequently become inactive and at times drift away from the church.

5. Division drives Christ out.

- (1) Matt. 25:40

IX. THINGS WHICH PROMOTE PEACE

1. Genuine love for the church

- (1) Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it -- Eph. 5:25
- (2) The welfare of the body of Christ is much more important than any one of us.
- (3) The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth", and ought not to be retarded in its work to satisfy the whims and fancies of immature members.

2. Sincere interest in the souls of others

- (1) Not only are we hindered in reaching the souls of aliens when discord is present in the local church, we do not even fulfill our responsibilities to each other as Christians -- Phil.2: 3 - 4
- (2) Many weak members and babes in Christ have been destroyed because of the thoughtless disturbances caused by hard-hearted brethren who would rather argue than work.

3. Retaliation forbidden -- Rom. 12: 19 - 21

4. Try to understand the other person

- (1) All of us are different
- (2) The "golden rule" -- Matt. 7:12

X. 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: 20 - 21

3. UNION -- a number of antagonistic elements may be brought together into a combination or union so far as outward appearances go, while all elements or division exist.

- (1) 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

- a. UNION seeks dwelling together despite differences

- (2) UNITY comes by individuals accepting the Word of God -- John 17: 20 - 21

- a. UNION may be had by agreement to get along.

- (3) UNITY prohibits division -- I Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4: 3 - 6

- a. 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; II John 9 -11

- a. UNION opens the floodgates for all manner of errors.

- (5) UNITY fulfills the Word of God

- a. UNION makes consciences and sincerity the standard of authority instead of the Word of God.

(6) UNITY is had by doing the will of God -- John 17: 20 - 21

a. UNION is had by compromising convictions and disregarding differences.

(7) UNITY eliminates error

a. UNION is a puny effort to patch up the damage caused by error without removing the cause.

(8) The Word of God is the foundation of UNITY

a. Liberty of opinion is the foundation of religious UNION

5. Let us all be alert to the difference between religious union and Bible unity.