

# Unity

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Unity, like motherhood, conservation, and apple pie is an unassailable principle. One who speaks about it without tears and a quivering voice is open to misunderstanding. However, all Bible subjects, including unity, must be subject to candid consideration.

Unity is something which God desires and demands. All who believe through the word are to be one in God that the world may believe that God sent Christ. (Jn. 17:20-22) Unity is also to be sought within the local church. (I Cor. 1:10-15) Factions, sects, and parties are contrary to the prayer of Christ and the plea of Paul. Individual members of the church are to be united that they may "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27, 4:2). The spirit of the New Testament, the hope of men, and the comfort of Christians is in the bosom of the blessings of unity in Christ, therefore, the importance of unity can hardly be over emphasized.

## I. Unity That God Does Not Desire:

1. **Unity in immorality.** The Corinthians were united with an immoral wretch. (I Cor. 5:1-11) This unity with him was "not good." It could lead only to the leavening of the whole lump. Individuals are likewise enjoined to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove (not unite with) them." (Eph. 5:11) Hence, individually or congregationally, God does not approve of unity with immorality.

2. **Unity with false doctrine.** Unity with false doctrine is popular and pleasing among men, but despicable and

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Jesus Christ," but, more than that, we must be able to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed." A failure in that area will mean that the stumbling misadventure of Boone, Franklin, and Dennis will be repeated over and over again with sickening frequency as the years come and go.

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detestable in the sight of God. (II Tim. 2:16-19) The faithful word must be taught that sound doctrine may reprove the gainsayer. (Titus 1:9-13) Sharp rebuke often manifests greater love to a proponent of error than does a unity kiss. When it is needed a surgeon's knife demonstrates more kindness than a prescription for aspirin. A love of truth frees one from the shackles of sin and servitude to Satan, (Jn. 8:32) but a merging of truth with error never produced anything but damnable error. This truth is self evident and is why Christians and denominationalists have no religious rapport.

3. **Unity in compromise with error to fight error.** Paul loved unity — would any deny it? — but he sought no compromise with Judaizing elements in the church in order to successfully fight "classical paganism." (Gal. 2:11-14) Paul's love for truth superceded his tender ardor for unity. He denounced the error of "Hymanaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, . . . and overthrow the faith of some." There are brethren today who have erred from the truth, and all agree that this is so. The cause is lack of satisfaction with scriptural authority and the result is the present apostasy, which is tantamount to saying "over-throw the faith of some."

Can anyone fancy or feature the peerless, fearless apostle Paul, when confronted by "classical Judaism," calling upon Hymanaeus and Philetus to join him in the fray for the faith against it? Would Paul say of them, "And however misguided (in our judgment) has been their devotion to 'saying that the resurrection is past already,' we do not for a moment doubt their sincerity and real desire to follow Christ," therefore, they should help us combat a common enemy — the threat of "classical Judaism?" No, Paul was no respecter of false doctrines. Error is not uprooted and unity is not planted by a peace offensive motivated by compromise.

## II. Unity God Desires:

1. **Is in truth.** "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." (Psa. 145:18) That is another way of saying that we have fellowship, union and communion with God when we worship him in spirit and in truth. The way Paul sought to help the Ephesians retain and maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" was to tell Timothy to "charge (not reapproach) some that they teach no other doctrine." (Eph. 4:3; I Tim. 1:3) This leads to the next point about the unity God desires.

2. **Is more important than peace.** Think of the alienation and separation that could have arisen at Corinth "because of" Paul's command concerning the fornicating brother. The divine direction was given despite the risk, for to attain unity in truth it must be treasured above peace. Many summits tower above the plains of God to

radiate his "eternal power and Godhead" but above them all stands the Everest of truth. Its glory and grandeur bounds, founds, and surrounds the unity that God desires and demands of his disciples.

Shepherds who strive for the flock cannot expect peace when the wolves, wandering in the midst of the flock, are attacked with the Spirit's sword. There are mouths that must be stopped because they pervert whole churches "teaching things which they ought not, . . . This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, (Why?) that they may be sound in the faith" (Titus 1:9-13). Do not seek a gray wolf's help to fight a black one! After the black one is run off over the hill the gray one will have the morsel he wanted all along - YOU!

If the liberals are to be called against a common enemy, why not the premillennial, one cup, no class brethren? They, too, oppose "classical liberalism." Who knows, maybe we could enlist the aid of the conservative Christian Church to help fight "classical societyism."

Paul's pen was an artist's brush when he wrote of the harmony and happiness of both Jew and Gentile reconciled to God in one body, the church. He gloried in the cross that made it possible for all men to be fellowheirs "and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:6). Yet, he risked the unity of the one new man by rebuking Peter. (Gal. 2:11-14) Paul's rebuke was severe and sincere, but who would have received the blame for the "Jew and Gentile Church of Christ Cleavage" if Peter and his party had retreated behind the cloak of Judaism? You know that Paul would have. Paul

did not love truth more than peace. He simply knew which was the most valuable.

**Conclusion:** It behooves us all to search and seek for the unity and fellowship that has been declared, but let us not lose our perspective. When the current controversy over the issues began to rage twenty five years ago, I was an immature five year old! Like many other young preachers I am vitally concerned about the institutional question and related issues. What shall be the ultimate result of this new attitude upon the many young Christians who have not borne the battle and who do not wear the scars of conflict? The seeds of compromise will bear fruit in a generation not hardened by the initial siege. No enemy of the truth is so formidable that it will take the union of truth and error to vanquish it. There is no peace on earth so precious that it should be used to hire troops of error to aid the truth. The ultimate success of the Lord's legions does not depend (thank God!) upon procuring and securing the services of the mercenary soldiers of error.

Let us thrust aloft the blood blotted banner of King Jesus and arm for the assault of Satan on every hand. The war waged for unity in truth must be fought by soldiers who will sound a sharp note of warning to all error bearers. Point the index finger of love and the sword of the Spirit and say to error in whatever form and on whatever front, "Thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." (Isa. 7:7)

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