

A Good and Pleasant Relationship

By Everett Hardin

Unity among the Lord's people pleases God and is beneficial to man. The Psalmist said, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,*" Psalm 133:1. A thing may be good and yet not delightful; or, it might be agreeable and delightful and yet not be a good thing. The Psalmist declares that it is both good and delightful for brethren to dwell together in unity. The church must never forget that preserving and restoring the unity of the body of Christ is part of its divine mission.

Certain ones from the household of Chloe had informed Paul that there were divisions among the brethren in Corinth. When he wrote to the church there, Paul condemned them for their "carnality," and pointed out at least two indications or expressions of a carnal mind; glorying in men and putting the wisdom of men above the wisdom of God. In beseeching them to overcome their problem he invoked the name of Jesus. "*Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,*" I Cor. 1:10.

By using the name of Christ to enforce and back up his admonition to them, the apostle called into play the authority of heaven. This would be sufficient influence in the mind and heart of any individual who had respect and reverence for the Lord; this name would challenge attention and demand concern from all who were not completely hardened. Paul gives three particulars in which they are to work in overcoming their dissension:

"Speak the Same Thing"

The first thing suggested to this strife-torn church was that they establish unity of speech. The confused state of affairs would not be tolerated; brethren must learn to speak the same thing. It is impossible to have unity without all those involved being willing to speak the same thing. When men teach different doctrines, there is division, when they are willing to teach only the gospel of Christ, unity will prevail. These brethren must all come back to a common message, the doctrine of Christ. This will correct their division; without it they can never have unity. Divisive doctrines, different opinions and ideas will bring discord. But when all confine their speaking to the truth of God unity will exist within the body.

Peter said, "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God,*" I Pet. 4:11. In order to speak as the oracles of God, three things are necessary: (1) We must have a knowledge of God's word. No man can speak as the oracles of God without knowing what the word of God teaches. (2) we must be satisfied to say only what the word of God says, without adding anything thereto. Private opinions and personal judgments are ruinous as a ground of unity, for the lack of authority and stability. (3) One must be satisfied with the word of God, and not add to, nor take from it, Rev. 22:18-19. This solemn warning against tampering with God's word should not be taken lightly.

“No Division Among You”

Paul said, “...*let there be no division among you.*” He was speaking of division within, rather than outside the church. Unity of believers is desired by the Son of God. He prayed, “*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me,*” John 17:20-21. The union of the Father and the Son is absolutely the highest conceivable harmony known to the mind of man. This and nothing less is the model and pattern for the oneness of believers. The great object of that unity for which Christ prayed was “*that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*” No doubt many thousands of infidels are made by the divided condition of those who profess to be believers in Christ.

Jesus said, “*Think not that I came to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law,*” Matt. 10:34-35. Christ came into the world as the Prince of Peace, but He knew that His word, as it entered into the hearts of some men would most certainly create faith. It would find hostility in another heart, and the man would be hardened. Thus, with one man believing and another rejecting it, it would be inevitable that the two would be set against each other.

The cleavage would extend even into a man’s own family. A man’s primary concern should be that he have peace with God; peace with the family must always be secondary to that.

“Same Mind and Same Judgment”

Paul wrote, “*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” Rom. 15:5-6. As long as a Christian has the “*mind of Christ*” he will be like-minded with other Christians. But when men are willing to seek harmony at the cost of truth or righteousness, they do not have the mind of Christ. Peace with God comes first; as long as that is maintained, the one having that peace is at peace with others that have peace with God. Thus between and among the true and faithful disciples of the Lord there will be unity.

Unity is good

Unity is good for the church in that it leaves the members at peace with one another. Internal discord, strife and anarchy will destroy a local church. For a group of people merely to meet under the same roof does not constitute unity in the Lord’s sight. It can be accomplished only if all parties who are proposing to dwell together, to agree on the teaching of God’s word as the bond of unity between them. Peace among ourselves is fertile soil and a good situation for growth of the church. “*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another,*” Gal. 5:15.

The unity of believers is good for the community because a peaceful church can serve to bless a community, while a church torn with strife and division cannot do much to convert others. The influence and strength of the church against erroneous teaching and sin is destroyed by a lack of peace among themselves. “*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every house divided against itself falleth,*” Luke 11:17.

Unity is Pleasant

Unity is pleasant because it helps us to love one another. Paul said, “*Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of men. If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,*” Rom.12:16-18. People who live together in unity, love and appreciate one another more than those living together in strife and contention.

Unity is pleasant because it makes the Lord’s work easier. Churches that are torn by strife and contention use their time and energy fighting one another; they have little time for doing the Lord’s work. They lose sight of the “*fields white unto harvest.*” Envy, strife, and division prevents spiritual development and is a sign of carnality. “*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal even as unto babes in Christ...For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*” I Cor. 1:1,3. The admonition Paul gave to Corinth would restore peace to Corinth; such a course will perpetuate peace among any people in any age.
