

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Demands of Unity

The word of God pleads for unity among the people of God. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our 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." Jesus prayed for unity among his disciples upon the basis of the word of God: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20).

The Unity of the Spirit Demands That Brethren Agree

The basis for unity is the word of God (John 17:20-21). All of God's people are to walk in truth (2 John 4). Jesus said truth can be known: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). He also said that truth can be identified: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The Apostle Paul said that truth can be understood: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"

(Eph. 5:17). Truth is always consistent because God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2). When we know the truth, understand the truth, and walk in truth, we will be of the same mind and the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10), we will agree. All who appeal to truth for their standard in religion will come to the same conclusion when they understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17).

Unity Demands That We Speak the Same Thing

Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our 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" (1 Cor. 1:10). When we understand the will of God, we understand it alike (Eph. 5:17), and we are all to preach the same plan (Eph. 4:4-6).

Unity Demands Effort

The Apostle Paul said that Christians must endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit: "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). The word "endeavor" means to give diligence; to put forth effort; to try. This means that brethren are to work at being united on truth rather than doing and teaching things that divide them. We must all endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Unity Demands That Brethren Stand for the Truth

God's people are to stand together against all evil. Paul said, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against

the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). In Philippians 1:27, he said: "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (NRV).

Unity Demands Oneness

The unity of the New Testament has as its foundation the word of God (John 17:20-21). This unity eliminates all error (2 John 9-11; Rom. 16:17) and prohibits division (1 Cor. 1:10). Paul said in Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all ..." It is the dwelling together without differences (1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16).

Conclusion

Let us consider Paul's question to the Corinthians: "Is Christ divided?" The answer is "No"! Christ is not divided in authority (Eph. 4:5; Matt. 28:18), in message (Eph. 4:5; Heb. 1:2), in body (Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23), nor in plan (Eph. 4:3-6). Let us all be alert to the difference in Bible unity and "unity-in-diversity" that is so popular among so many today. This false unity is the devil's compromise and is destroying the church of the Lord in many places. We must all work for unity that is based upon the will of God (John 17:20-21).

- Donald Townsley

Brotherly Love

“Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1). In some places, this passage cannot be obeyed. It must be preceded by admonitions to “let brotherly love begin,” for it obviously cannot “continue” where it has not yet begun!

Is this such a place? God forbid! However, all the bickering, backbiting, all the strife and division, in some places tells us that “brotherly love” is in short supply or is on back order. (1) Envy and jealousy are at the root of much of the contention that exists among God’s people. When men resent the money, honor, talent, ability, or success of another, bitter gossip will soon begin. (2) Pride kindles the fires of ungodly, unloving words and deeds. Pretentious, proud men feel imaginary slights and are wounded by arrows that have never been shot. Such men cannot be reasoned with, for every earnest appeal is regarded as another “attack.” (3) Laziness and indifference are the mother of hateful attitudes and the father of slanders. Those who do the least, gripe and grumble the most. They do nothing to advance the cause of Christ. They teach no one. They encourage no one. They invite no one. They assist no one. Their idleness gives rise to negative thoughts, to whining words of complaint, and to vicious deeds which will undermine peace, unity, and love.

In every church that is torn apart by a lack of brotherly love, look around, and you will see envy, jealousy, pride, laziness, and indifference. They are the agents of confusion and contention.

Brotherly love cannot begin, nor will it continue, where these things abound. They are poison to the soul and destroyers.

- Larry Ray Hafley

Worthy or Worthily?

With the present day expressions taking hold and often repeated with little or no thought, it does us good to occasionally pause and give consideration to certain expressions that have been adopted and put into frequent usage. Some of these expressions may be in correct accord with the word of God, others are quite out of harmony. It is the latter that we need to shun, to give way to expressions and wording that is in accord with Bible usage.

One such expression that has been widely adopted is found in the first epistle by Paul to the Corinthians, 11:27. He here says: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." (KJV.) From this passage, many today will offer the prayer that we might be "worthy" to partake of the bread and fruit of the vine. However, such is not the teaching of this particular passage.

If the Lord were to make one's being "worthy" an essential feature in partaking of the Lord's Supper, I fear many of us would fall under the above condemnation, as all have sinned (Rom. 3:23, I

John 1:5-10), and are thus unworthy to partake of this blessed memorial. Being guilty of sin and limited judgments, who is man to determine within himself that he is worthy to partake of these memorials of the body and blood of our Lord.

However, as mentioned, this is not the teaching of this passage. The American Standard Version renders the correct meaning more clearly, translating it thusly: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord." The word worthily (KJV) is an adverb, describing the manner in which the elements are partaken, and not the condition of the one partaking (adjective). All the Bible says about the condition of the one partaking is that the supper was designed for those "in the kingdom" (Matt. 27:39-44), and since the kingdom is the church, it would be those in the church-- Christians.

But, then, the question is asked: Why the condemnation if the one is merely eating or drinking in an "improper fashion?" Is not a memorial a memorial, regardless of how accepted? This question is not hard to answer if we will but place ourselves in the shoes of the New Testament disciples. The supper (as instituted by Christ) is a spiritual memorial with very special significance attached, as they recognized. It was a means of drawing them closer to the realization of the benefits obtained by the death of Christ on the cruel cross of Calvary. (I Cor. 10:14-17.) In partaking with a flippant attitude--not really concerned whether he bother with it or not, one was actually making a mockery of this sacred memorial--intentionally or otherwise. By so acting, he was; as guilty of mocking the death of Christ and his claims of deity, as were the

Jews who mocked Him at the cross. (Matt. 27.) With this attitude, such a one stood condemned in the eyes of God.

Lacking the proper spiritual attitude, and thus obtaining nothing in the way of spiritual growth and renewed courage during this part of the worship (and more than likely, nothing during the rest either), is it any wonder Paul said, "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly and not a few asleep? " (I Cor. 11:30.) With such an attitude, how could they worship God "in spirit and truth?" (John 4:24.) Thinking only of themselves, such was impossible. (I Cor. 11: 20.) If the spiritual value of this Supper be destroyed, so will be the individuals who, by their ungodly attitudes (lacking the proper attitude), have led to its downfall by their unconcern for its place in their lives. (vs. 27, 29.)

Let us indeed guard ourselves that we speak properly (I Pet. 4:11), as well as being sure our motives are also correct. Then can we indeed develop, as God desires.

- Donald P. Ames

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Which Jesus Do You Love?"* (text: John 8:1-11); Sunday evening: Bi-monthly Singing.