

UNITY OF THE BELIEVERS



We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Things that unite believers are infinitely more important than the minor things that separate them, understanding that we cannot have fellowship with those who deny Christ.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness: and what communion hath light with darkness:

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Still we often are tempted to segment into separate groups and denominations, refusing to fellowship one with the other. This is tragic and contrary to what Christ desires of us.

Often the tools the enemy uses to divide us from other believers are pride, prejudice, covetousness, criticism, discouragement, distrust, fear, favoritism, selfishness, resentment, and retaliation. Paul's attitude toward others preaching should be ours, "Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice".

Philippians 1:15-18

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

There is a bond of unity Jesus expects us to keep. In our day when the harvest is so great and the laborers are few, may we have the courage and convictions to lay aside our minor differences in doctrine and fulfill the task Christ gave us.

Mark 16:15 And He said to unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

I. ONENESS OF THE BELIEVERS

Romans 12:5 So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

The things that bind believers are far more in number and importance than the things that divide them. In these last days, it is urgent that we reach out in fellowship to our brothers and sisters in Jesus, and seek to join in the great harvest of souls before Jesus comes.

A. Jesus broke down the partition between Jews and Gentiles by His death on the Cross and made all believers alike in Him.

Ephesians 2:13,14,17

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the Blood of Christ.

14 For He is our peace, Who hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

He reconciled all into one body.

B. The Church described in Acts was so united that they held all things common.

Acts 2:44-47

***44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.***

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

It was a vibrant church because of this unity.

C. We in Christ are one bread, one body, and partakers together of the Bread of Life.

1 Corinthians 10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body for we are all partakers of the one bread.

D. There are no “classes” of citizens in the Kingdom of Jesus.

Ephesians 4:1-7

¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

⁴ There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

⁶ One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

⁷ But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

1. One Body.

2. One Spirit.

3. One Hope.

4. One Lord.

5. One Faith.

6. One Baptism.

7. One God.

II. ONENESS, BUT DIFFERENT MINISTRIES

Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers

Differences in minor doctrinal interpretations should not divide us. These differences provide worship opportunities and services for people of different tastes. While there is a oneness in believers, there are also different ministries in the Church.

A. We all have different ministries in the Church, and each ministry is equally important.

1 Corinthians 12:14-27:

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

B. Different spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to various Church members.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

C. Christ is and should be recognized as the Head of the Church.

Galatians 1:18 And He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.

Also, we receive nourishment from that Head.

Colossians 2:19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increased with the increase of God.

D. We must do our best with the gifts we have been individually given.

Romans 12:6-8

⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

⁷ Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;

⁸ Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

E. God has set in the Church.

Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers;

1. Apostles. Those assigned the task of starting and overseeing churches.
2. Prophets. Preachers with great power proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom.
3. Evangelists. Those whose main ministry is evangelism, or bringing the lost to Jesus.
4. Pastors. Those who are responsible for overseeing the spiritual welfare of believers.
5. Teachers. Those who have special gifts and abilities to teach God's Word to believers.

F. All ministries have been given by God for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and edifying the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

III. ONENESS IN SYMBOLS

John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep through Thine Own Name those Whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are one.

Jesus loves the Church and gave Himself for it.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.

In His Words, there are six symbols of the Church. Note in every instance the symbol is singular. Christ has one Church of which He is the Head. Jesus prayed for the oneness of His Church. The symbols of His Church are.

A. A sheepfold.

John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.

It is a place of protection and rest for all the sheep all over the world.

B. The body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

This speaks of the interdependence of one member to another.

C. The Bride.

Revelation 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

This speaks of the undying love for the body of believers known as the Church.

D. The Family.

Ephesians 3:15 Of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Our fellowship together is indeed as that of brothers and sisters in a good family.

E. The flock.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His Own Blood.

Like sheep, we need care and concern of the Good Shepherd and His under-shepherds.

1 Peter 5:2-4

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

F. The Branch.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.

This speaks of our dependence on Jesus as the Source of our life and strength. He is the Vine.

IV. ONENESS IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY.

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The responsibility of maintaining unity in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is left to the believer. We must always strive to maintain our unity because our Lord desires we be as one. His lengthy prayer for us was that we might have unity.

John 17:1-26

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee:

2 As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.

4 I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.

5 And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine Own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

6 I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine.

10 And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine Own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.

18 As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.

22 And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one:

23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.

26 And I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

A. Clearly Christ does not want division in His Church.

1 Corinthians 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

B. We are told not to let any division come among us.

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.

C. Division in the body comes because we permit our carnal nature to rule.

1 Corinthians 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

D. We are to mark and avoid those carnal ones who divide the Church.

Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause

division and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

E. We have to make a conscious effort to keep unity.

Ephesians 4:1-3

¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.

³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

F. The ultimate goal of believers in the Church is to come to unity and perfection.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

G. Those who bring believers together in unity are the ones who are called the children of God.

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

V. ONENESS IS OUR TESTIMONY.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Study notes from THE PRAYER KEY NEW TESTAMENT Lifeline Partner Special Edition KJV published 1979 by Rex Humbard. Contributors Rex Humbard, Ron Hembree, John T. Hendricks (all three men are in Heaven)

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