

Unity in Diversity

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The phrase, "**Unity in Diversity**", is used by the religious denominations of the world to represent the notion that all faiths are bound for heaven, just by different routes. They differ in doctrines of baptism, original sin, irresistible grace, women preachers, gay clergy, and a thousand other beliefs. True Christians wonder how all of these differing views can find agreement with one another in regards to their "salvation".

One way is to consider all these differences as matters that are **inconsequential to God**. They like to believe it does not matter to Him if you call yourself a Baptist or a Nazarene. He does not condemn anyone for diverse doctrines as long as they label themselves "*Christians*" and claim to believe in Him. Issues like baptism, instrumental music, and salvation by faith alone are merely matters of human preference. God accepts them all. It is like Romans 14 issues. God does not care if you eat meat or abstain. He does not care if you observe holy days or not. All the differences in the denominations can be placed under the Romans 14 banner as inconsequential issues to God.

Other views that allow for "unity in diversity" include the notion that **God wants unity above all else**. He does not care about errors in doctrine as long as we get along with one another.

Another reason for acceptance of one another is the belief that **doctrine does not matter**. God only wants a general faith. Specifics do not matter to Him. We could add to this the concept that **no one can understand the Bible**. Therefore God will not condemn the many different interpretations that men hold.

Differences exist, but they are not called to our attention. The religions of men want to accept everyone as saved except the unchurched. These people are the target for recruitment. They

need to join the church of their choice in order to be saved. Of course, some denominations will disagree with this view as well. They believe everyone is saved by Jesus' death, and you can belong to any church or no church. The alliance in the church of your choice is simply a preference and has nothing to do with salvation from sins. That is taken care of by **grace alone**.

The Bible does not teach what the denominations believe. 2 John 9 says, "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*" We can only hold to one doctrine, Christ's. Doctrine does matter. The teaching can be understood. There is a distinction made among the saved and the lost in the word of God.

There is no salvation is just any church, no church, or the church of your choice. Salvation is found in the body of Christ, and there is only one body (church) Eph. 4:4, 1:22-23.

It is not up to man to decide what is inconsequential to God. Romans 14 gives us clear examples of what does not matter to Him. We cannot take any Biblical concept we choose and place it in this chapter.

God desires unity, but it is unity that is founded upon following the word of God. Jesus prayed that we might be united like He and the Father were. That unity is not based on ignoring differences and allowing many doctrines. The Father and the Son were united in truth (Jn. 17:17, 21).

I have heard people from the churches of men criticize these truths by saying, "*you are cookie cutter Christians*". The meaning is that we are all cut out of the same pattern and have no originality. We are mindless followers of a rigid faith.

If Jesus is the cookie cutter then we take this as a compliment. We are to follow the **pattern** of Jesus. We accept the **form** of doctrine revealed in the New Testament alone (Rom. 6:17). We imitate Christ and encourage all men to do the same. Salvation is found in no other Lord, church, or doctrine than His.

Although we are the same in Christ we are also different in our abilities. This is the Bible's concept of "**Unity in Diversity**". We are united in the body of Christ, but we have been given different abilities by which we contribute to the edifying of the church.

1 Cor 12:4-7 records the words of Paul, "*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are **differences of administrations**, but the same Lord. And there are **diversities of operations**, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*" The authority is the same. God is in charge and we follow His doctrine. This is where we are united. The Holy Spirit has given different gifts to individual members. This is how we are diverse. These gifts make us dependent upon one another and allow us to make contributions to help the others.

The specific gifts Paul was writing about were miraculous powers the Holy Spirit had given the Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 12:8-10). Rather than using these gifts to build up the church, certain members were using them to vaunt themselves. The congregation was being divided by the selfishness of these members and the abuse of these powers. Paul points out the way to correct this behavior was love (1 Cor. 12:31-13:13).

Although we do not have miraculous gifts we still have individual talents and opportunities. We can still use our gifts to help others or to boast about ourselves. We can still acknowledge these gifts come from God or pretend they are of our own making (1 Cor. 4:7). We can use our diversity of abilities to unite our brethren under the authority of Christ. Be good stewards.