

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

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The Importance of Unity

By Everett Hardin

A fundamental doctrine of the New Testament is the unity of believers. The Lord prayed to this end. He said, *"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 also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me,"* John 17:20-21.

Believers must be united in Christ. Whatever unity might be effected outside of Christ is a failure. He is not praying merely for a local group; He is not praying for just one sect, or faction, or even one denomination. He prays for all who believe, for every man in whose heart the preaching of the word brings faith. For what does He pray? He prays that His followers *"may be one."* He is not praying merely for union, but for the same kind of unity He had with the Father.

What was the reason or purpose behind this desire? Listen to His words: *"That the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* Jesus indicts division, denominationalism, and sectarianism among believers, as being the cause of unbelief and infidelity. The very hot-bed from which infidelity arises is religious division. Why do so few people attend religious services? Why so little interest in churches? Why are we not able to preach effectively to the unbelievers?

In many instances it is because people have become confused and disgusted by the conflicting claims of religious bodies of the land. They are lost in the maze of human differences, human doctrines, and human creeds. They do not find their way to God because of the many doctrines being preached and the many different churches all claiming to be the one true church. Many ask this preacher and that preacher; they study this creed and that creed; go to this church and that church. And finally wind up taking the attitude that all churches are right, or all churches are wrong.

Paul gave the solution to the problem when he gave the platform on which true unity must be built. *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling, One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all,"* Eph. 4:4-6. When Paul wrote *"one God,"* it meant unity in worship,

“*one faith*” means all are to preach the same message and believe the same thing, “*one baptism*” means there must be unity in our obedience, all are to obey the same commandments, “*one body*” means all are to enjoy the same fellowship; “*one Spirit*” means all are to be united under one rule, according to the same teaching; then “*one hope*” means there is to be unity of desire and expectation. These seven Unities constitute the only basis upon which unity is possible from the human viewpoint as well as the only basis from the Divine standpoint. Unity depends upon certain fundamentals that must be recognized.

A Standard That Is Accepted

All must live or walk in strict obedience to the word of God in all things. The apostle 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 judgement,*” I Cor. 1:10. God’s word is the only basis for unity. Unity on any other basis than truth is a failure. To have unity of speech it is necessary that men speak the same thing. Those who fail to abide in the word of Christ break fellowship with God/ “*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,*” 2 John 9. The teaching of Christ and the apostles is the only standard for unity (Gal. 1:8). Those who reject the word of God place themselves out of fellowship with God and make it impossible for faithful Christians to continue in fellowship with them.

A Willing Mind

Even if we all agree upon the word of God as the only infallible standard for unity of believers, unless there is a **willing mind** to accept and live by the standard, we can never have unity. The will of man is the vital part of him that must be involved if two walk together. Paul said, “*fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of **one mind**,*” Phil. 2:2. If we are united in mind concerning the things of God, we will always be united in word and deed. To have unity we must cultivate lowliness, meekness, and forbearance in love, Eph. 4:2. “*Can two walk together except they be agreed,*” Amos 3:3? For a group of people to meet together under the same roof does not constitute unity in the Lord’s sight. It can be accomplished only by all parties who are proposing to dwell together to agree to the teaching of God’s word as the bond of unity.

Working Members

Every blessing in life that is worthwhile involves responsibility. Membership in the church bestows upon us great privileges and blessings and involves serious obligations. Wherever and whenever men turn from or disregard the word of God, there will be a breaking of fellowship and division. “*If we walk in the light as He is the the light, we have fellowship one with another,*” I John 1:7. The doing of God’s will is essential to going to heaven (Matt. 7:21). James teaches us that **doers of the work** “*shall be blessed in their deed,*” James 1:25. Unity is achieved by believers walking by the same rule and speaking the same thing.

In Matters of Judgement

Brethren must respect and consider one another in matters of human judgment. The first step toward unity is humility; without that there will be no meekness, no patience or forbearance, and without these is no unity. Brethren will differ in matters of judgment. Even Paul and Barnabas, inspired men, differed in their judgment about John Mark. Yet their differences did not alienate them as brethren. We should stop and “*consider one another,*” to weigh all the evidence

brought forth by each one in support of his claim. There should be no closed door policy against my brother in Christ who gives his judgment in regard to matters in which the Lord has not spoken. Christ came to slay all enmity. Therefore, there should not be found among Christians a spirit of opposition in such matters.

Unity is Good And Pleasant

*The Psalmist said, "behold, how **good** and how **pleasant** it is for brethren to dwell together in **unity**,"* Psa. 133:1! Unity is **good**, good for brethren, good for our converts, good for the outside world. Unity is good for the church in that it leaves the church members at peace with one another. Internal discord, strife, and anarchy will destroy the local church. *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against itself falleth,"* Luke 11:17. Peace among ourselves is fertile soil and a good situation for the growth of the church.

The unity of the church is **good** for the community because a peaceful church can serve and bless a community. An unobstructed plea for unity cannot be made to the denominational world when division exists within the church. Such a condition stops the ears of others. The influence and strength of any church against erroneous teaching and sin is destroyed by a lack of peace and harmony.

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 all men,"* Rom. 12:16-18. People who live together in unity, love and appreciate one another.

Division in the religious world at large, or in the congregation, is condemned as contrary to the Spirit and will of our Lord and destructive to the church and the souls of men. We must recognize that the church is the greatest institution in the world. Christ laid down His life to purchase it (Acts 20:28). It is greater than any preacher or member; it is greater than my ideas or your ideas. It is God's divine chosen means of drawing us unto Himself and ultimate glory. It is worthy of every sacrifice we make in its behalf. It is God's dwelling place among men, and the glory that is offered God is to be reflected in the church (Eph. 3:21). Unity must become the prayer and effort of the individual who would be pleasing to God.
