

January 23, 2022

## A Good And Pleasant Relationship

By Everett Hardin

There is nothing more clearly taught in the Bible than that God wants the followers of Christ to be one. Jesus prayed most earnestly for this unity, and the entire teaching of the New Testament with reference to the church, both the direct testimony concerning it and the figures used to represent it, set forth the unity of the one church of the Lord. 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***" (Psa. 133:1). But men are tragically, hopelessly and in many cases uselessly divided. Hence, unity is a subject of vital importance.

### The Unity Demanded

**1. Unity of speech.** 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 division among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (I Cor. 1:10). The first thing suggested to this strife-torn church was that they establish unity of speech. To have unity of speech it is necessary that men speak the same thing.

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 they lack authority and stability. (3) One must be satisfied with God's word and not add to or take from it (Rev. 22:18-19).

**2. Unity of organization.** Paul said, "*...let there be no division among you*" (I Cor. 1:10). He was speaking of division within rather than outside the church. Unity of believers is desired by the Son of God. To this end, our Lord prayed to the Father. He said, "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they 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).

The scope of this prayer is universal. It includes every person who has ever believed in Christ or those who shall believe in Him. He is not praying merely for a local group; He is not praying just for one sect, or faction, or even one denomination. He prays for all who believe, for every one 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 indites division, sectarianism, among believers, as being the cause of unbelief and infidelity. The very hot-bed from which infidelity arises is religious division. A divided condition among the Lord’s people will also cause more division. Suppose a preacher should preach a conflicting doctrine every night of a gospel meeting — what effect would that procedure have on his audience? Extend this principle to the denominational world and observe the result! What makes it right for several denominational preachers to preach the conflicting doctrines, but wrong and inconsistent for one man to preach them?

**3. Unity of mind and judgment.** We should be of one mind, *“That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (?Rom. 15:6). Unity of mind refers to our thinking, while judgment refers to our action. 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, and forbearance in love. High-minded arrogance will nullify our efforts for unity.

**4. The True Platform.** Paul gave the platform on which true unity must be built. *“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 who is over all, and through all, and in you all”* (Eph. 4:4-6). When Paul wrote *“one God”* that means all are to respect the same authority; *“one faith”* means all are to preach the same message and believe the same thing. *“One baptism”* means there must be the same unity in our obedience; all are to obey the same commandment; *“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 or expectation.

This platform is a platform of unity. There is the unity of worship, unity of authority, unity of message, unity of practice, unity in organization, unity in life, and in desire. This is the unity for which Christ prayed. *“Unity of the Spirit”* is not an attitude that looks favorably on all divergent views. The Holy Spirit has revealed God’s mind and when people listen to Him and follow the teaching in the New Testament they will be united. Let us therefore, bring all our life, our teaching, our worship into harmony with God’s revealed pattern.

**5. Unity is good.** 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”* (Lk. 11:17). Peace among ourselves is fertile soil and a good situation for the 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 the church is good for the community, because a peaceful church working can serve and bless a community, while a church torn by strife and division can do little to convert others. 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 among the members.

**6. 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 all men. If it be 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. Families which are divided can work and play together; but when the time comes for them to go to places of worship, they must separate.

Unity is pleasant because it makes the Lord’s work much easier. Churches that are torn by strife and contention use their time and energy in fighting one another; they have little time left for doing the Lord’s work. They lose sight of the *“fields white unto harvest”* because their time is taken up biting and devouring one another. Envy, strife, and division prevents spiritual development and is a sign of carnality. Paul charged the Corinthians with being carnal because of the envy, strife, and division that existed among them (I Cor. 3:1-3). Because of these things many become disturbed and frequently become inactive. Let us do always thongs things that promote unity and refuse to promote division.

During the early days of the church people by the thousands obeyed the gospel, thereby becoming a happy brotherhood; but today, with religious division in full swing, only a small percentage of the people of this country make any effort to be faithful, even to what they profess to believe, and those who do make an effort are hopelessly divided into warring sects and parties. True unity will never be restored and preserved unless professed Christians recognize and accept the New Testament as the only and absolute standard of authority in all matters of religion. *“God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son,. Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds”* (Heb. 1:1-2).

If all of God’s people were one, then the New Testament will have the influence the Lord intended for it to have. The Savior’s prayer for the unity of His people will have been answered. *“With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4:3). Unity is neither acquired or maintained by accident.

\*\*\*

### **You Finish the Story:**

Once there was a congregation in which every member was just like **you**. Each one cooperated and supported every program just the way **you** have been doing. Everyone worked as hard and attended the same services and gospel meetings that **you** do. The elders, deacons and the preacher were all as interested in the church as **you** are at this time. They put the same emphasis on their recreation, business, and other material affairs that **you** do. Each member gave just as **you** do. Within a year or so, this congregation **died...or...doubled in size???** -Copied