

Church Unity: It Is Commanded!

by Casey Head

Where multiple people are gathered together into one group, there will occasionally be problems or disagreements. That is simply the nature of people. Personalities may clash. The wrong thing may be said or a comment is taken the wrong way. Someone forgets to do something. Promises are broken. Doctrinal issues arise. And we all have bad days, of course, and our moments of weakness. In many churches, grown men and women may resort to acting like children, and they allow many of these issues to unnecessarily divide them. Rather than following the many principles that are found in God's word, they become selfish and proud. It is the purpose of this series of articles to outline how the local church is to maintain unity.

First of all, we must recognize that God expects the local church to be unified. Jesus tells us in John 17:20-21, "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." The context is clearly pointing to unity through the word of God (verse 17), and so if we follow the common standard that God has given us, then we should be able to maintain unity, not only in doctrine but in attitude (as our attitude is governed by the doctrine). Paul furthers this thought in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Not 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." The context plainly sets forth that we should avoid sectarianism in the church, yet many Christians ignore this passage and division abounds. Certain individuals follow the preacher while others follow a certain elder, and the result is all-out war. Ephesians 4:3 says, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." In other words, Christians must strive to follow the teachings of Christ through the Spirit (unity in doctrine) while maintaining peace (unity in attitude). Finally, if you would consider Philippians 2:2, "Fulfill ye my joy, that he be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Can anyone deny, after considering these many passages, that God expects and demands unity? Let us strive to obey God!

For some reason, many Christians feel that it is alright to bicker and fuss with their brethren. They ignore the principles which God set forth and aren't even phased by their disobedience. Rather than putting forth the effort to obey God's command to be unified, they act selfishly. How wicked is it to for a person to willingly cast aside the law of Christ? How evil is it to ignore God's word for the sake of your own ambitions? Why can't Christians just simply submit to the New Testament?

As we close this first article, please understand that if you want to be pleasing to God, that you **MUST** put forth the effort to establish unity in the local church that you are a part of. You can't leave that work to other people and then later complain that there is division. So how are you doing? Are you a part of the construction crew or the demolition crew? Are you selfless in your efforts to maintain unity or do you seek division? What is your attitude towards your brethren in Christ?