

UNITY IN THE CHURCH

1 Corinthians 1:10 ... “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

In our previous devotional we spoke of the impossibility of unity between believers and unbelievers, until an unbeliever reconciles with God. God intends for there to be sharp division between the righteous and unrighteous. Today's verse introduces us to a form of unity that God highly favors.

When Paul wrote to the church he started in the Greek city of Corinth, Christianity was still new and being shepherded by Christ's Apostles. The new Christians only had available to them the same Old Testament Hebrew scrolls used in Jewish synagogues. So, news of the Messiah's arrival, his death and resurrection, Christ's teachings, and other information we have today in the New Testament, could only be passed from one church to another by word-of-mouth and hand-written letters. That made it hard to ensure accurate and consistent teaching.

The early church – thousands of small assemblies outlawed by the Roman emperor – survived extreme persecution and began coming together in a loose association of churches, which is now called Catholicism, in AD 325. It was an early attempt to lock-in certain doctrines and correct inconsistent teaching. In 1517, Martin Luther birthed the Protestant movement as a challenge to Catholic doctrine. That probably represented the first large scale division among believers and we have been dividing on the basis of doctrine and theology ever since. So, today's disunity is not only between Catholics and Protestants, but between many different Protestant denominations, and between them and numerous cults that have gone far afield of Biblical teaching.

Is unity possible in this climate of radical differences in Biblical interpretation, worship practices, and carnal influences? Probably not in a significant way. On occasion, believers from different groups come together for special joint worship services, such as the Jesus Reigns events. However, some of the differences represent very great distinctions that many believers feel they must not compromise on. Differences are found relative to the deity of Christ, the existence and role of the Holy Spirit, the sovereignty of God, the purpose and conduct of the sacraments, the new birth, and salvation itself, among others. When considering differences among Christians that are based on acceptance or rejection of foundational Biblical teaching, we must realize that unity will not always be possible or correct. On the last day, our physical churches and denominations will not be judged collectively. Each person will answer to Christ on the merits of his or her own salvation and works. Your church cannot protect you from yourself or from faithless devotion. You alone are responsible for committing to and obeying Christ.

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