

Redwater Restorer

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)

Volume 3

No.2

January 28, 2006

Remember The Unity God Desires

Published By:

Redwater
Church of Christ

Services:

Sunday
Bible Class 10:00 a.m.
AM Worship 10:45 a.m.
PM Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

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"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 judgment." (1 Cor.1:10).

The church of Christ in the city of Corinth of the apostle Paul's day was embroiled in religious division. People were following men rather than Christ, dividing into sects. Some were abusing worship. One man was living with his father's wife. Not a pretty picture. But doesn't it remind us of the religious disunity found today among those who call themselves Christian? I mean those who wear names above their meeting places not found in the New Testament. Those who have different terms of admission into Christ's kingdom; different styles of worship which either are not found in the New Testament or are a corruption of Old Testament worship; different forms of church government; and, different and conflicting doctrines not even hinted at in the Bible. *"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* (Matt.15:9).

Disunity is the harbinger of unbelief. The Lord as He prayed to the Father concerning His apostles and his future followers 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..."* (Jn. 17:20-21). What if the early Christians had all been divided saying; *"...I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas... (1 Cor.1:12)?* The world would never have believed the Gospel. *"...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand."* (Matt. 12:25).

Today we have a monstrosity of disunity called denominationalism. The word denomination means a part of the whole. Many of them confidently proclaim, "Just attend the church of your choice," as if Christianity was one big spiritual smorgasbord. Others confidently, though bitterly divided, claim unity in diversity. This is the antithesis of God's desire for unity. *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"* (Amos 3:3). Instead of all this confusion, why not return to the pure milk of God's word and find out His plan for religious unity.

Approved Unity Is Based On The Authority Of Jesus Christ

The Corinthian Christians knew that what Paul was writing was backed up by the authority of Jesus Christ

"...by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (1 Cor.1:10). By "authority," he meant the power of one whose will and commands must be obeyed by others (*Vine*). Jesus Christ has received all authority (Matt. 28:18) from God (Heb. 1:1-3). Today that authority resides in the New Testament. It is not found in a purported vision from God or a "nudging" of the Holy Spirit but in the God-breathed words of the writers of the last will and testament of Jesus Christ. *"Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."* (Jn. 17:7-8).

Often absent from any discussion about religious unity is the question, "Where is the authority?" *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."* (Col. 3:17). That authority from the Lord (ie. in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ) is not found in the wisdom of men: creeds, disciplines, catechisms and church manuals. It is not found in human attempts at religious union such as the National and World Council of Churches. They were all formed too late in history to have spiritual authority. That authority is not found in the traditions of men (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:18).

Jesus is the head, the ruler, the king of the church (Col.1:18). As such He has the supreme authority over its unity. He is the standard. Think of the chaos that would result in this world if there were no standard or authority in matters of weights and measures, in money! Such is the reflection of what is happening in the religious world with no God-given authority.

Approved Unity Is Based Upon Preaching The Same Gospel

Unity among Christians in the First Century A.D. depended upon all proclaiming the same message or *"...that ye all speak the same thing..."* (1 Cor.1:10). Those who did not were accursed (Gal. 1:6-9). That Gospel was not to be compromised because *"...it is the power of God unto salvation..."* (Rom. 1:16).

Obedience to the Gospel did not produce Repentists, Paulites, or Peterians but Christians — a glorious name (1 Pet. 4:16). Likewise today that same Gospel does not produce Baptists, Methodist or Catholics but simply Christians.

Remember...Unity (Continued)

The religious confusion prevalent today is caused by men *not* preaching the same thing the apostles and evangelists did in the First Century. The Spirit says, "*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 above all, and through all, and in you all.*" (Eph. 4:4-6). That *same* Gospel places one in the *same* body or church — not many denominations (Matt. 16:19). It is the *same* faith, not many faiths. The same baptism, immersion in water for remission of sins (Acts 2:38, Col. 2:12). The *same* Holy Spirit, not a spirit of confusion and religious excess. "*Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*" (1 Cor. 2:13).

Approved Unity Does Not Bring Religious Division

Paul's missionary journeys did not leave behind many denominations, but many congregations of the one church. This is why he was so disappointed with the brethren in Corinth. Brethren there reported to Paul that the church was divided into sects or schisms, each following a different man (1 Cor.1:12). It was a popularity contest. The different names they held detracted from Christ and caused division.

The denominations of the 21st Century were all founded by men putting themselves above the word of God. Powerful, charismatic leaders teaching false doctrine; fostering a cult of personality (Matt. 7:15). They often have religious hierarchies which demand devotion and money from their members (Jer. 17:15). All of these are human organizations with human names and man-made traditions and doctrines that rob Christ of His glory. "*For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good works and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*" (Rom. 16:18).

Paul's plea was for there to be *no divisions* in the church, but unity in Christ (1 Cor.1:14-15). Christ cannot be split into parts, His body cannot be splintered.

Approved Unity Is Based On Unity Of Mind And Judgment

Paul commanded the Corinthians to be perfectly joined together (1 Cor. 1:10). The phrase derives its meaning from fishermen mending a net. The Corinthian brethren's unity was fragmented and desperately needed mending. They were entangled in the sin of disunity and division. "*He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.*" (Lk. 11:23).

The only way to be perfectly joined together was for them to be united in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Cor.1:10).

This means they had to be:

United in like purpose as the Father and the Son are (Jn. 10:30).

United with the mind of Christ, the mind of a servant (Phil. 2:8).

United around the same standard — the word of God (2 Tim.3:16- 17).

United in one spiritual goal — eternal life.

United in the same love one for another (Rom. 5:13).

Denominations would have to give up a lot and accept a lot in order to attain true Biblical unity. They would have to get rid of creeds, manuals and catechisms and accept the Bible only as the basis of unity. Most would have to reject religious titles such as "Father" and "Reverend" which are unscriptural (Matt. 23:9). They would have to give up vain worship: the use of mechanical instruments of music, the use of women in positions of authority, the burning of incense and candles, the veneration of images, etc. "*God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (Jn. 4:24). They would seek to restore worship authorized by the New Testament: weekly observance of the Lord's Supper and unaccompanied congregational singing (Eph. 5:19). They would have to give up unscriptural church government and restore the pattern laid out in the New Testament (Acts 14:23). Finally, they would have to drop the names above the doors of their meeting places which do not glorify Christ and are unscriptural.

Jesus Christ meant for all who would submit to Him, to be united together as His brethren. Religious division or denominationalism is a sin in His sight. Why not just go back to the Bible and be a citizen of Christ's kingdom, a Christian, a member of the one church you can read about in the New Testament? Satan's world trembles before such simple unity. As our tempted yet unbowed Savior told Satan, "*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" (Matt. 4:4).

If you are interested in any of the following please check the appropriate box and mail to the address below. Please include return address and phone number if possible.

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