

God Revealed through the Church

The Church – A Demonstration of God's Unity

An old legend tells of a noisy carpenter's shop in which the tools of the trade were arguing among themselves. Brother Hammer was told by his fellow tools that he would have to leave because he was too noisy. To which he replied, "If I am to leave this carpenter's shop, Brother Gimlet must go too; he is so insignificant that he makes very little impression."

Little Brother Gimlet arose and said, "All right, but Brother Screw must go also; you have to turn him around and around again and again to get him anywhere."

Brother Screw said, "If you wish, I will go. But Brother Plane must leave also; all his work is on the surface, there is no depth to it."

To this Brother Plane replied, "Well, Brother Rule will have to withdraw if I do, for he is always measuring others as though he were the only one who is right."

Brother Rule then complained against Brother Sandpaper and said, "I just do not care, he is rougher than he ought to be and he is always rubbing people the wrong way."

In the midst of the discussion, the Carpenter of Nazareth walked in. He had come to perform His day's work. He put on His apron, and went to the bench to make a pulpit. He employed the screw, the gimlet, the sandpaper, the saw, the hammer and the plane and all the other tools. After the day's work was over and the pulpit was finished, Brother Saw arose and said, "Brethren, I perceive that all of us are labourers together with God."

Ephesians 4: 1 – 16

1) The Basis of the Church's Unity (vs. 1 – 5)

- Paul urges the believers to live a life worthy of the calling that we have received
 - We live a life worthy of our calling by living in unity with one another
 - Discord and division amongst Christians brings the Gospel and the name of Jesus into disrepute
- 3 character traits are necessary to live in unity
 - Humility
 - Gentleness
 - Patience –bearing with one another in love
- Even though unity comes about by the work of the Holy Spirit we are called to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit
 - God provides the resources for unity but we have the responsibility to bring about the unity that God expects of us as believers
- There is one body and one Spirit
 - Paul uses the analogy of a body
 - Each of us has a body and we have a spirit – No one has more than one body and no one has more than one spirit
 - So the body of Christ is one and the Holy Spirit who fills His body is one.
 - Along with this we all share in one hope – the hope that is in Christ – the hope of glory.
 - Thus there is unity in who and what we are in Christ and unity in where we are going – our purpose – in Christ
- Our oneness as a body with a single hope lies in the fact that we were all saved and serve one Lord by one faith and into whom we have shared one baptism – baptism into His death, burial and resurrection.
- We all believe in one God who is the Father of all
 - He is over all – the Father from whom all things come
 - He is through all – The Son through whom all things hold together
 - He is in all – the Holy Spirit who pervades the lives of all believers.
- The eternal triune God has always existed and worked in perfect unity and thus in His working within the body of Christ He will bring about the same unity that exists within Himself.

2) Reaching Unity in the Faith (vs. 7 – 13)

- Without the gifts of grace that God gives we will not reach unity in the faith.
- Paul reminds us that it is Jesus who came from heaven, died on a cross for us, was buried, was raised to life and ascended to higher than the heavens in order to fill the whole universe who has given us the gifts of grace to attain to the unity of the faith
 - It was him who has, through His body broken on the cross, reconciled us to God and broken down the wall of hostility that we might become one.
 - Not only has He made us one spiritually but is making us one in relationship, in purpose, in faith, in hope
- As with our salvation we have been saved and are perfectly saved in God's sight when we believe – We have been justified by faith
- In reality we are in the process of being saved – our character is being transformed in to the likeness of Christ – sanctification
- So it is with our unity in the body of Christ. When we are saved God sees us perfectly as one body but in reality we have the responsibility to make the effort to reach unity in our relationships and in our faith.
- In order for this to happen God has give gifts to the church
- He has given some to be:
 - Apostles – those who are sent to establish the church
 - Prophets – those who have messages of inspiration from God for the church
 - Evangelists – those who reach out and grow the church
 - Pastors and teachers – those who care for and nourish the church with the Word of God
- These gifts are to prepare God's people for works of service
 - The purpose that the body of Christ may be built up
 - That we may reach unity in the faith – this is not a mere tolerant coexisting with others of other faiths but a unity in what we believe.
 - That we may reach unity in our knowledge of the Son of God
 - That we may become mature – attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ – become like Christ in our character – love for one another.

3) Working in Unity (vs. 14 – 16)

- When we have reached unity in the faith in knowledge and in character we won't be unstable in what we believe and do and run to every new teaching that comes out.
- Our stability lies in our own personal relationship with Christ and our knowledge of his truth
- It also lies in our sense of oneness in that we watch our for one another and when we see someone going off at a tangent we speak the truth in love to him
 - Our unity in the body of Christ isn't a matter of "live and let live" or the Hindu concept of your "Ishta Deva" which means you worship the god of your desire – "What is good for me isn't good for you and what is good for you isn't good for me". Hindus can believe in different gods as being supreme yet neither will argue the matter and still regard each other as Hindu.
 - Christian unity is based on the truth of Christ and His word and any unity that discards truth discards true unity.
- We are not to have anything to do with a divisive person
 - Titus 3: 10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him
- When we speak the truth in love we will – as the body of Christ – grow up into Christ who is the Head of His church
- When we take up our responsibility to attain the unity of the body of Christ and work out our differences rather than avoid them or fight over them then we demonstrate the unity of God.