

Unity through Humility

Donald Grey Barnhouse told the story (supposedly true) about Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes. When he moved to Washington, D.C., to take up his duties as chief justice, he transferred his membership letter to a Baptist church in the area. His father had been a Baptist minister and he also made a profession of faith in Christ. It was the custom for all new members to come to the front of the sanctuary at the close of the worship service. The first to be called that morning was Ah Sing, a Chinese laundryman who had moved to the capital from the West coast. He took his place at the far side of the church. As the dozen or so other people were called forward they stood at the opposite side of the church, leaving Ah Sing standing alone. But when Chief Justice Hughes was called, he took his place beside the laundryman. When the minister had welcomed the group into the church fellowship he turned to the congregation and said, "I do not want this congregation to miss this remarkable illustration of the fact that at the cross of Jesus Christ the ground is level." Barnhouse commented, "Mr. Hughes behaved like a true Christian. He took his place beside the laundryman, and by his act he prevented embarrassment to the humble Chinese; he showed, too, the love of Christ—he had this gift of standing by."

Philippians 2: 1 – 11

1) Unity with each other comes from unity with Christ (vs. 1 – 2)

- Paul states 5 qualities in our relationship with Christ as a basis of unity with each other
 - Encouragement from being united with Christ
 - Comfort from His love
 - Fellowship with the Spirit
 - Tenderness – bowels – inward affection
 - Compassion
- If we have these qualities then our unity will be demonstrated in 4 practical ways
 - Being like-minded
 - Having the same love
 - Being one in spirit – being in agreement
 - Being one in purpose
- Paul had laboured in the Gospel which is all about relationships and thus it would make his joy complete by his disciples living in right relationship
 - If we get it right in having right relationships then we have discovered the true essence of our lives in Christ – firstly relationship with him and secondly relationships with each other
 - If we don't get this right then we have missed the point and merely have an empty shell called religion

2) Unity through humility (vs. 3 – 4)

- The 2 hindrances to unity
 - Selfish ambition
 - Vain conceit
- Humility is demonstrated in:
 - Considering others better than ourselves
 - Looking to the interests of others and not only to our own interests

3) The example of Christ Jesus in humility

- We ought to have the attitude or mind – thinking – of Christ
- Jesus knew who He was – He knew He was God
 - He didn't have to prove it or try and prove it
 - We need to be confident in who God has made us.
 - Story of the Governor of Massachusetts when he was running to be re-elected and went to a barbecue and was famished. He wanted 2 pieces of chicken and the lady giving out the chicken would only give him one piece. He said "Do you know who I am? I'm the governor of this state." to which she replied, "Do you know who I am? I'm the lady in charge of chicken. Move along, mister."
 - She knew her place and was confident in it
 - Insecurity in who we are can cause us to be domineering, authoritarian and cause strife rather than unity
- Jesus humbled himself and became a man – more than that he became a servant
 - If we hold on to our status we will never achieve the unity that God desires
 - We need to recognise that worldly status has no place in God's kingdom.
 - Because Jesus was confident in who He was He was never concerned about what people thought of Him when He humbled himself to servanthood.
 - We spend a lot of time trying to prove our worth rather than serving others.
 - If we take our focus off ourselves to serve the needs of others as Jesus did then we will achieve the purposes of God in relationships.
- Jesus humbled himself sacrificially
 - We normally place limits on ourselves to what extent we will humble ourselves
 - Jesus didn't put any limits to which he would humble himself and went to the extreme because that is what it took to reconcile man to God.
 - Will we humble ourselves to the extreme to bring about right relationships between ourselves?
- Jesus didn't seek to glorify Himself – He left that up to the Father to do
 - Matthew 23: 8 – 12 But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.