

UNITY

TEXT: Psa. 133:1: "Behold, how good and how pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

THESIS: Unity must be more understood and applied for the health of the church and its growth.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Someone once said: "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success."
 - a. As one Flock, we are gathered together.
 - b. As one Family, we dwell together.
 - c. As one Body, we are joined together.
 - d. As one Temple, we are framed together.
 - e. As one household, we are built together.
 - f. As one Kingdom, we strive together.
 - g. As one Church, we worship together.
 - h. And, this is a beautiful picture of unity in God's family.
2. Unity is an important New Testament doctrine, and it is everyone's responsibility.
 - a. Unity in the Lord's church affect all of us.
 - i. It affects us spiritually.
 - ii. It affects us mentally.
 - iii. It affects us physically.
 - b. The Lord's church must be united and must maintain unity.
3. This morning we will look at four very important aspects of unity.
 - a. The IMPORTANCE of UNITY.
 - b. The BASIS for UNITY.
 - c. The REASONS for UNITY.
 - d. The HINDRANCES to UNITY.

DISCUSSION:

- I. THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY.
 - A. The unity of the N.T. church was important because:
 1. Jesus prayed for it.
 - a. He 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; 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. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." (Jn 17:20-22).
 - b. Jesus shows here that there is no separate will, kingdom or interest in the Godhead.
 - c. But when it comes to man, Jesus knew that religious division would fuel disbelief and skepticism which is why he told us that if Christ will abide in your heart, that one life will draw all who have

Christ formed within themselves which makes them into one family.

(1) This is why minds of like precious faith join together.

(2) Thus, we must keep the unity of the spirit.

2. Now, the Apostle Paul also pleaded for unity.

a. “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)

(1) It was here the people were not following God.

(2) But, as James points out, you cannot have peace (unity) until you first have purity of the Gospel (Jam. 3:17).

b. On another occasion, Paul had to correct some saying, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” (1 Cor. 3:3-5)

(1) Envy, strife and division are outward problems of the flesh by which in this case, they were following Paul more than God.

(2) They were exhibiting the jealous and discordant spirit which is a characteristic of men of the world.

(3) But, instead of following human leaders (their preacher), Paul was trying to teach them to all be following Christ.

c. So Paul said, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;” (Phil. 1:27)

(1) Be perfectly united regardless if someone is around or not.

(2) Make the Christian life attractive by standing in one spirit, with a singleness of purpose and in unity as we spread the Gospel together.

(3) No denomination can hold up to that.

d. And, “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (Phil. 2:1-2).

(1) If there be any comfort in Love, fellowship, and mercy, then there should be a comfort in Christ because this supports unity.

(2) God must be in our homes, recreation, business and not just

in the worship only.

3. But then we also see that the church in the first century practiced unity.
 - a. For, “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” (Acts 4:32).
 - (1) Even though they were of different ages, tempers and conditions, they laid all that aside and there was no discord, no division, no jealousy, no uneasiness.
 - (2) They were unanimous in the faith of Christ, being joined together in love.
 - (3) Perfectly united as one body and with one life.
- B. The unity of the N.T. church was not:
 1. A union of conflicting forces.
 2. A federation of denominations.
 3. An alliance of religions.
- C. The unity of the N.T. church was all coming together, being one in Christ.
 1. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor 12:13)
 2. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:26-28)
- D. The unity of the N.T. church was oneness in Christ.
 1. They believed the same gospel.
 - a. For, “he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature . . .” (Mk 16:15)
 - b. Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Rom 1:16)
 - c. Surprisingly though, Paul had to write, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal 1:6-9).
 - (1) Paul expected more out of these Christians than to lose unity and bicker with one another and to remove themselves from the Gospel because it removes one from

- God and his grace.
- (2) Yet, they would intimidate, belittle, blackmail others for standing for the truth and trying to silence the righteous so these unfaithful Christians could bring in things contrary to the truth.
 - (3) This was serious and discouraging because they had lost their unity.
2. The unity of the N.T. church was oneness in Christ when they had obeyed the same gospel.
 - a. Heard (Rom 10:17); Believed (Jn 8:24); Repented (Lk 13:3); Confessed (Mt 10:32); Baptized (Acts 2:38).
 3. They had been added to the same church (Acts 2:47).
 4. They kept the same ordinances (1 Cor 11:2).
 5. They continued in the same doctrine (Acts 2:42).
 6. They wore the same name (Acts 11:26).
 7. They were of the same mind (Phil 1:27).
 8. They spoke the same things (2 Cor. 4:13).
 9. They walked by the same rule (Phil 3:16).
 10. They had the same love one for another (Phil 2:2).

II. THE BASIS FOR UNITY

- A. The Bible gives us the pillars of unity.
 1. It is written, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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 4:1-6).
 2. One body - unity of organization (Eph 1:22-23)
 - a. "that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:" (Eph 2:16).
 3. One Spirit - unity of revelation (Jn 16:13).
 4. One hope - unity of aim.
 - a. For, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," (1 Pet 1:3-4).
 5. One Lord - unity of authority.
 - a. "to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (1 Cor 8:6)

- (1) God is the great source of all and all depend on him.
- (2) The whole work of creation and everything has been formed in accordance with his plan.
- b. Therefore, we owe our existence to him and by our Lord, we have been saved by the washing of regeneration (Tit. 3:5).
 - (1) For the Lord is the ruler of mankind, he is the lawgiver.
 - (2) He is our king, the King of all kings and all in the universe will bow to his majesty either in joy or shame (Phil 2:9-11).
- 6. One faith - unity of doctrine.
 - a. Jude wrote, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3)
 - b. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" (Eph 4:13).
- 7. One baptism - unity of practice (Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).
- 8. One God and Father - unity of deity.
 - a. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:" (Deu 6:4)
 - b. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." (Isa 43:10).
- B. The Bible gives us patterns of unity.
 - 1. Our unity should be like that which exists between God and Christ (Jn. 17:20).
 - 2. Our unity should be like the members of the physical body (Rom 12:4-5).
 - 3. Our unity should be like that of a husband and a wife (Eph 5:30-32).
 - 4. Our unity should be like a finely knitted sweater (Col 2:2).

III. THE REASONS FOR UNITY.

- A. There are a number of reasons why we need to be united.
 - 1. Jesus prayed for it (Jn 17:20-22).
 - 2. That the world might believe.
 - 3. That the church might be glorious.
 - a. Jesus said, "the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:" (John 17:22).
 - 4. There is encouragement in unity.
 - 5. There is joy in unity (Psa 133:1).
 - 6. There is progress in unity.
 - a. For as it is written, "they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat

with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:46-47).

7. There is strength in unity.
 - a. “Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” (Mat 12:25).
 - b. Have we ever considered that the reason we hurt so much as Christians is because we are not always in unity with one another bearing one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:1-2)?

IV. THE HINDRANCES TO UNITY.

- A. The preaching and teaching of opinions.
 1. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Pet 4:11).
 2. Now, there have been several times when prophets or teachers attempted in vain to speak for God.
 - a. In Jer. 23:21, “I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I spake not unto them, yet they prophesied.”
 - b. In Jer, 23:16, “... They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah.”
 3. He who truly speaks God's oracles must speak that which God puts in his mouth (Deut. 18:18).
 - a. If he does not, he speaks presumptuously, meaning that he speaks assuming things and not those things commanded by God (Deut. 18:20).
 - b. This is why we have the Gospel, so we can all be on the same page, so that we can all speak the same thing whether we are here or across the world.
- B. Selfishness is a hindrance to unity.
 1. You go your way, I will go my way and we will see each other on Sunday.
 - a. Where did we ever learn to be stingy and care only for our own well being, refusing to acknowledge others.
 - b. This isn’t high school where you only speak to certain friends and ignore the rest of the body.
 2. Paul said, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” (Phil 2:4).
 - a. Paul encourages us to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to dissension or disagreement.
 - b. Showing genuine interest in others is a positive step forward in maintaining unity among believers.

- C. Loyalty to a man or a group hinders unity.
1. Paul said, “these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.” (1 Cor 4:6).
 - a. Pride does not belong in the church and neither do cliques because they split the church and do not bring unity.
 - b. These Christians were fighting in that some thought they were better than others.
 - (1) Its like sometimes in prayer, I will hear that we should be better Christians.
 - (2) I know what they mean, but it is impossible to be a better Christian.
 - (3) You can be more faithful, but there are not degrees of Christianity.
 2. Every Christian should regard themselves on the same level: Christians.
 - a. No Christian should see himself as better than another Christian.
 3. And, Paul was trying to teach here that when you put one person above the rest or put a group of other Christians above the rest, you fail to promote unity . . . and, that is sin.

CONCLUSION:

1. Peace in God’s family comes through knowledge and obedience to the Gospel of peace.
 - a. We must be peacemakers, with genuine love, mercy, willingness to forgive and have respect for those who are weaker.
 - b. Yet, we must never make peace equal with compromise.
 - i. We must always be aware of things that threaten peace:
 - (1) False doctrine and theories.
 - (2) Following after men.
 - (3) Vainglory and personal ambition.
 - (4) Making laws for God and binding human opinions.
 - (5) Creating new concepts in worship.
 - (6) Worldliness
 - (7) Trying to make or wage war, being disagreeable.
 - ii. God demands peace on his terms which is why he gave us the foundations for it in Eph. 4:1-6.
2. We have seen the IMPORTANCE of UNITY, the BASIS for UNITY, the REASONS for UNITY and the HINDRANCES to UNITY.
3. Unity is possible only if we are following God’s Word.
 - a. Unity is what we must have here at the Belle Church of Christ.
 - b. Unity is what we must endeavor to keep because unity is everyone's responsibility.
4. Invitation: