

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **1Corinthians 11:17-19**.
- B. Jesus said that a house divided against itself cannot stand (Mt. 12:25). While the great promise exists that no outside force will ever destroy the church (Dan. 2:44; Mt. 16:18), the church can be damaged from the inside out.
- C. This morning, a lesson as a little preventative medicine. I don't know of any serious problems in this area, but the devil could begin to work against our unity!

I. JESUS DIED FOR THE ONE CHURCH.

- A. Various references on the fact of there being only one church:
 - 1. Paul taught the same doctrines everywhere and in every church (1Cor. 4:17).
For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.
 - 2. The church is the one body of X (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).
(Eph 1:22-23) And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.
(Col 1:18) He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.
 - 3. Jesus taught that He would build but one church (Mt. 16:18).
“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.”
 - 4. The story of the vine and the branches illustrates there is but one vine, and individual Xians are the branches attached to that one vine (Jn. 15:1-8).
- B. Jesus prayed for the unity of the one church (Jn. 17:20-23).
“I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **21** that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. **22** “And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; **23** I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.
- C. Paul wrote of how there is to be one body (one church) in Eph. 4:6-8.
There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.
- D. There are to be no divisions. Christians are to wear the name of X, not any other (1Cor. 1:10-13).
Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. **11** For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. **12** Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” **13** Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?
- E. Love is the perfect bond of unity (Col. 3:14).
And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.
- F. Xians are to be united in one purpose, serving the Lord (Phil. 2:2).
make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.
- G. But unfortunately, we read of situations where groups did exist, and the unity so desired by X and the apostles was not present.

II. SPLINTER GROUPS.

- A. Jewish groups.
Even the Judaism of X's day was very splintered and broken up. I know of at least seven different sects of the Jews in the first century:

1. *Pharisees*. The word itself means “the separated ones, or separatists.” This was the most influential of the three prominent societies of Judaism.
 2. *Sadducees*. This group accepted only the Law, and rejected the oral traditions. They did not believe in the resurrection, immortality of the soul, or a spirit world.
 3. *Essenes*. This group is not mentioned in the Bible, but they are mentioned by Josephus, Philo, Pliny, and Hippolytus. They lived a simple but strict life with their own set of purification rites. They did not participate in the temple worship. It is the Essenes who are thought to be responsible for the Qumranian texts called the Dead Sea Scrolls.
 4. *Herodians*. This group is mentioned twice in the NT and believed in the rulership of Herod as the promised kingdom. They were very loyal to Rome.
 5. *Zealots*. This group was the opposite of the Herodians, in that they were very patriotic for the Jews against the Romans. Josephus states that they were a hateful people that would use violence to accomplish their views.
 6. *Scribes*. Also called *lawyers* and *rabbis* in the NT. They devoted themselves to the preservation, transcription, and exposition of the Law. Jesus probably mentioned them in Mt. 15:2-6 when He said, “according to the tradition of the elders.” All higher instruction was in their hands.
 7. *Elders*. A group of older men in each community that made all the major decisions for that community. These men also made up the majority of the Sanhedrin.
 8. *Others*. That leaves all of the other Jews who made up the “rank-and-file” and were not members of any particular group, only influenced by all these other groups.
- B. Doctrinal groups.
At Corinth (1Cor. 11:17-19). Paul condemns the groups that had formed in the church at Corinth. There were factions that existed as mentioned here and in 1:10-13. The point can be positive in that when such groups appear, those who are truly Xian will also be made evident. They should not be encouraging such groups, but pleading for the unity.
- C. Social groups.
James spoke of those who showed favoritism (Jas. 2:1-9). They were making distinctions and forming “groups” contrary to the spirit of Xian unity; distinctions not made in NT.
- D. Fellowship groups.
In 3John, we read of an individual named Diotrephes who unjustly made himself an arbiter and put some out of the church with whom he disagreed (3Jn. v9-10). This man claimed spiritual power that he did not have. He drew lines of fellowship by his own doing, not according to the will of God.

III. THE VALUE OF ONE ANOTHER.

- A. Some of the “one another” passages of scripture. If every member would be doing these things, they will promote and keep unity in the body.
1. From Romans (Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 14:13; 15:7).
 (Rom 12:10) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
 (Rom 13:8) Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.
 (Rom 14:13) Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.
 (Rom 15:7) Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
 2. From Paul (1Cor. 16:20; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:13).
 (1Cor 16:20) All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.
 (Gal 5:13) For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
 (Eph 4:32) And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
 (Phil 2:3) Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;...
 (Col 3:13) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone;

- just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.
3. From the general epistles (Heb. 3:12-13; Jas. 5:16; 1Pet. 1:22; 4:10).
(Heb 3:12-13) Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
(Jas 5:16) Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
(1Pet 1:22) Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,
(1Pet 4:10) As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
 - B. Do not practice Gal. 5:15, 26.
 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. **26** Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.
 - C. We are to love one another, see 1Jn. 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2Jn. v5.
(1Jn 3:11, 23) For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; **23** And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.
(1Jn 4:7, 11, 12) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.
(2Jn v5) Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.
 - D. It is very easy to get into little groups due to social similarities. We must make a conscious effort to reach out to those we don't normally associate.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Some practical things you can do to keep the spirit of unity in the bond of peace:
 1. Consider who you can greet at services that you normally do not talk to.
 2. Sit in a different place in the auditorium as to get to know others.
 3. Invite brethren in your home, and always those you have never entertained.
 4. As much as possible participate cross-culturally in helping with events for those not in your age or social standing.
 5. Always give the “benefit of the doubt” when contentions arise. Get all your facts straight before you say or do anything.
- B. Being united is not just in keeping with what God has commanded (Eph. 4:2), it means that there is no end to what we can do (Gen. 11:6).
- C. Pray for, plan for, and live for unity in the body of X.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.