

Let The Bible Speak Series

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God's Plan For Unity

Good morning and welcome to our program. It is certainly good to have you with us. We appreciate your loyalty in viewing our program. Today I want to talk with you about God's plan for unity. In John 17:20-21 Jesus prayed that his disciples might "all be one as thou father art in me and I in thee that they may also be one in us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me." That prayer is still applicable today. The world of religion, however, is terribly divided. Hundreds of religious organizations, all claiming to be the church Jesus built, speaking different doctrines, wearing different names, and following different rules. The Lord, however, has a plan for unity. If that plan is followed unity will exist. Let me read it to you, it is found in Ephesians 6:3-6. I want to begin today by talking about I. The Evils Of Division.

1. Division is wrong because it is opposed to the prayer of Christ in Jno. 17:20
2. Division is wrong because it is contrary to scripture--1Cor.1:10 "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
3. Division is wrong because it results in a waste of time, means and energy.
4. Division is wrong because it retards the salvation of the world. But what are the

II. Causes of Division?

There is no division over what the bible says. Division is caused by a departure from the divine pattern. Professed Christians are divided over what the bible does not say about: wearing human names, creeds, church government, baptism, worship etc. etc. If this is true, then what is

III. The Way To Unity?

Before we can unite in religion, in a way that will please the Lord, we must seek for and find the true basis of unity. It can be found, but in order to capture it, there are some things that must be cast aside. Illustration: Suppose I possess the only knife in existence. Someone sees it, and wants one also. This person takes out one blade of my knife and then makes the rest of the parts until he also has a knife. Another person sees my knife and decides he wants one also, so he takes out another blade and builds another knife. This process results in a number of knives being produced. Not one of them can claim to have the original knife. There is, however, a way that the original knife can be produced. If each person who took a piece of the original knife will give back the part that was taken, we can reproduce the original knife. This process will result in a number of left over parts. That, however, is not the fault of the original owner. The same is true of human denominations. Each one contains some truth. But that which is peculiar to each, is of human origin. If each would emphasize only truth and teach only that which was a part of the original pattern, we could have unity. The ground of unity is characterized by two things: (1) That which is held in common, and (2) that which is scriptural.

Suppose three men from different denominations came together to discuss unity. They agree to test each article of faith characteristic of their particular belief.

1. What do we have in common? How are we alike? 2. Are these things scriptural?

For example they consider the name that they wear. Do they all wear the same name, or do they wear different names? Can they find the name they wear in the Bible? Is the name they wear of human or divine origin? Suppose each gives up every name that cannot be found in the bible, what will happen? Remember: no truth that is held before will be lost when this procedure is followed. The result will be the use of only those names used in God's word. Only that which is human will be lost or cast aside.

IV. God's Plan For Unity.

When you see the word "one" what comes to your mind? Do you immediately think of multiple choices? Or do you think of the singular? One means one doesn't it? It does not mean two, three, or four. Eph. 4:1-6 gives God's plan or platform for unity. What is it?

a. There is One Body---Unity of Organization.

1Cor.12:13 "For by one spirit are we all baptized in to one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Rom. 12:4-5 "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many are one body in Christ and everyone members one of another." These verses speak of the church in its universal sense, i.e. the rule of Christ in the hearts of men and women. There is no earthly head or headquarters for this relationship. It is the Kingdom of God under Christ the king. Reconciliation unto God can be found nowhere else but "in one body by the cross" Eph.2:11-17. God is glorified through Christ in no other relationship but his church Eph. 3:21(to him be glory, in the church...) Christ himself is the founder of this one body, his church. Mt. 16:13-19. He is the head of the body, the church Eph. 1:22-23 "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is the body, the fullness of him that fills all in all." For the first few hundred years after Christ built his church, one was either a Christian, or member of His church, or he was a servant of Satan and out of the church. As a result of departures from the faith once delivered, there grew out of Christ's one true church, what when fully organized in AD 606, was an church or organization foreign to the teaching of the scripture. Out of this organization came all the denominations currently existent in the world today. Thus from one body, as a result of departures, sprang hundreds of bodies all claiming to be the one built by Jesus. If we have unity, we must get back to the one body.

b. One Spirit--Unity Of Revelation.

To have unity of revelation, we must have a common source from which to drink spiritually speaking. That one source is the Holy Spirit. The Apostles claimed to speak or write as they were "guided by the Holy Spirit." Eph. 3:5 "which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets." 1Cor.2:10 "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit, For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." Jesus promised to send the Spirit to guide those whom he chose into all truth. Jno. 16:12-13 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He the spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak and He will tell you things to come." Hence, all spiritual truth is found solely in the New Testament for those who desire to follow and please Christ.

For one today to depart from New Testament authority, is to depart from Christ and be condemned for so doing Gal. 1:6-9 "I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him who called you into the grace of Christ..." When men write creeds, articles of faith, catechisms, disciplines, etc. to which they appeal for their beliefs and practices in religion, it is impossible to obey the prayer of Christ for unity. So long as these uninspired barriers exist, division will be perpetuated.

c. One Hope--Unity of Reward.

People differ as to that for which they hope at the end of this age. Some hope for an existence on this earth. They believe that only 144,000 will go to heaven and that everyone else will remain here. Others believe Christ is coming to establish his kingdom and rule for 1000 years on this earth. Hence they look for an earthly kingdom which is clearly a contradiction of Jno. 18:36 "My kingdom is not of this world..." The New Testament holds only "one" hope to mankind. What is it? Christ said our hearts should not be troubled for he has gone to prepare mansions that he will give to those who love and obey him. Jno.14:1-2 "Let not your hearts..." Peter said that our living hope is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away reserved in heaven for you." 1Pet.1:4

d. One Lord---Unity of Authority.

Surely no one would deny that Jesus is the one Lord spoken of by Paul in this verse. This being true, there is only one Lord who has authority to command us and from whom we must receive instructions in order to please Him. "All authority is given..." Mt. 28:18-20 "He is head of the church..." Col.1:18 Many desire to have Jesus as their savior, but refuse his authority over their lives. This cannot be. Jesus asked some of his day "why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things that I say?" Luke 6:16 No one can be subject to Christ and reject his teachings at the same time.

e. One Faith---Unity of Doctrine.

There are many faiths on the religious scene. Even among professed believers in Christ. Each of these faiths is inscribed in some creed, discipline or manual. They are human and not divine. The one faith, of which the Bible speaks is called: the faith---Acts 6:7; Jude 3 faith---Gal. 3:23 the gospel or the word of truth. There is only one body of divine truth and it is found in the New Testament.

f. One Baptism---Unity of Action and Design

Design means purpose. For what purpose were believers baptized in the biblical record? Was it merely symbolic? An outward expression of an inward change? Were they baptized to join the local church or because they were saved? What say the scriptures? Remission of sins Acts 2:38 Wash away sins Acts 22:16 Saves us 1Pet. 3:21 To be saved Mk. 16:16 Into one body 1Cor. 12:13 Put on Christ Gal. 3:27 Hence, if you have been baptized believing that you were already saved before your baptism, then your baptism is not the "one baptism" of Eph. 4:5

g. One God---Unity of Object of Worship

It is essential that we have the right object of worship. The Athenians worshiped God ignorantly and consequently their worship was not acceptable. Acts 17:22-31.

There are "lords many and gods many" said Paul, but to us there is but "One God and Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him" 1Cor. 8:6. Jesus declared to Satan "It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve" Mt. 4:10. This is God's plan for unity. If all religious people followed this plan, we would be united and not divided. There would not be hundreds of denominations, but only one true Church, the one built and purchased by the blood of Christ.