

# Northeast Church of Christ

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## From the Pen of Paul: *Unity*

The psalmist, David, wrote, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133:1). Unity is something to be desired; religious unity is needed to show the world that Christ is God's Son. Unity is desired between brethren, but not at the sacrifice of Truth.

The Bible speaks of the evils of division. “And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand” (Mark 3:24-25). At Corinth, division is listed as a sign of carnality. “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and *divisions*, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (I Cor. 3:3). Those who cause division are not serving God, but their own selfish interests. Paul declared, “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such *serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly...*” (Rom. 16:17-18a). Earlier, in His prayer to His Father, Jesus prayed for unity among all believers “that the world might believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17:20-21). While unity promotes faith, division leads to unbelief. James also declared, “Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:16). And, if that is not enough, Solomon lists “he that soweth discord among brethren” among the “six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him” (Prov. 6:16-19).

The need for unity can be seen from the fact that Jesus prayed for it (John 17:20-23).

Paul also pled for it. “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” (I Cor. 1:10). Unity causes men to believe (John 17:21). Peacemakers are said to be “blessed” or happy in Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:9). And the writer of the book of Hebrews declares, “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). Unity is required before we can be of “the same mind and the same judgment” (I Cor. 1:10).

How can we have this unity? It is apparent that the religious world is divided into many, many fragments in complete disregard for the Bible's exhortations. What is the basis for this unity?

It is not the doctrines of men. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:8-9). It is not tradition and practices of men. Paul warned, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 3:8). Jesus had earlier stated, “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9). And later, in the same context, He stated, “Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many

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***“Under the constitution of the United States we have the right to freedom of speech. Would you take such privileges away if it were within your power?”***

OFTEN PEOPLE PUT WORDS in one's mouth and often they misrepresent one. I have always tried to rightly represent one and all. I would not misrepresent another person knowingly for anything. On the same basis I do not want others misrepresenting me. The person making the statement above perhaps means to represent me properly but he does not.

I am in full agreement with the first article of the Constitution of the United States which says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right to the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for redress of grievances.” If I had the power to bring men into bondage for following this article, I would not. I believe men have the right to speak out and to worship in their own preferred manner. I may disagree with their religion and their manner of worship, but I think men should have the right to choose with reference to these matters.

I do not think some understand what freedom of speech and worship really means. When we talk about freedom of worship, we are not advocating that one has the right to sacrifice an innocent human baby on an altar. This is going beyond what Article One of the constitution authorizes. The men that

drew up the constitution of our country expected us to use some common sense with reference to it. I can think of many outrageous things people could do in the name of worship that would not be authorized by our constitution.

When it comes to freedom of speech, I am convinced that many in our nation have taken the first article of our constitution out of context. Some seem to think this authorizes one to say what he wants to regardless as to place, time, and those present. The only persons who say exactly what they think every minute in the day are babies and fools. Sensible people would not dare say all that goes through their mind. There is reason in all things and on general principle in this country one may say anything he pleases, provided that what he says is not slanderous or contrary to the public morals; and provided that he does not advocate the overthrow of the government by force.

We need to get things back to where they belong. We have let a group of liberal-minded folk lead us down, to some degree, a trail of doom. Most good, moral, upright, people have sat by with their mouths shut. If we are not willing to stand up for the right, we deserve what we get.

—*Malcolm L. Hill*

such like things do ye” (Mark 7:13). Read Mark 7:9-13 for His complete statement.

The first commandment requires that we love God with “all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30). But John defined love for God when he wrote, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). Jesus had earlier said the same thing: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (John 14:21).

What then is the basis for unity? We are to “walk by the same rule” (Phil. 3:16); that rule is God's word, given by inspiration, and by

which we will be judged (I Tim. 3:16-17; John 12:48). We must be able to give Bible authority for everything we do and say (Col. 3:17; I Pet. 4:11). We must abide in the doctrine of Christ (II John 9). God's plan for unity is found in Ephesians 4:1-6. If this plan were to be followed, there would be but “one body” (Eph. 4:4). That one body is the church (Eph. 1:21-23). Are you in that “one body” which walks strictly by the Bible? Can you find the church you are a member of and the doctrine taught therein in the Bible? If not, why not accept God's plan for unity and help promote faith among those of the world?

—*Paul M. Wilmoth*