THE UNITY WHICH CHRIST DEMANDS

Intro: Christ’s desire is for all believers to be united; John 17:20-21 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 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.” It is a gratifying experience for brethren to live united; Psa. 133:1 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Thus, we should strive to keep the unity Christ demands (not some pseudo-unity); Eph. 4:3 “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

I. UNITY IS DEMANDED.
   A. When the gospel is preached in its purity, unity results.
      1. Acts 2:46 “And 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,”
      2. Acts 4:32 “And 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.”
   B. In matters of obligation — likemindedness or agreement.
      1. Matters of obligation are those things that God has authorized. He authorizes in three ways.
         a. Direct statements (whether they are imperative, declarative, interrogative, hortatory or conditional statements).
         b. Implication.
         c. Accounts of approved action (examples).
      2. Within those areas of obligation there must be agreement.
         a. Amos 3:3 “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”
         b. Rom. 15:5-6 “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: 6 That ye may with one mind {and} one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
         c. Phi. 1:27 “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;”
         d. Phi. 2:1-2 “If {there be} therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, {be} pitiful, {be} courteous:”
      3. 1 Cor. 1:10 “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.”
         a. Same mind.
            (1) 1 Cor. 4:6 “And 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.”
            (2) Phi. 2:5 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”
         b. Same speech.
            (1) 1 Pet. 4:11 “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.”
(2) 2 Tim. 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

c. Same judgment (action).

C. In matters of option (expedient matters) — liberty.
2. 2 Cor. 8-10.
3. These types of matters would include: which preacher, what mission work, which benevolent work or orphan homes, color of carpet in the building, etc.
4. Our attitude toward all these optional matters should be:
   a. True love one for another; 1 Cor. 13:5 “Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;”
   b. Rom. 12:10 “{Be} kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;”

II. Division Is Demanded.
A. As desirable as unity is, it is sometimes condemned.
1. There must first be purity; Jam. 3:17 “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, {and} easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”
2. We must remember Christ said; Luke 12:51 “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division;”
3. 1 Cor. 10:21 “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”
4. 2 Cor. 6:14 “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”
5. Thus, we must separate ourselves from evil.
   a. 2 Cor. 6:17 “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean {thing}; and I will receive you.”
   b. Eph. 5:7 “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”
   c. Rev. 18:4 “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”
6. Reason we must not have unity: 2 John 11 “For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

B. We must not have unity with:
1. Doctrinal error
   a. Tit. 1:9-11 “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.”
   b. 2 John 9-11 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into {your} house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”
2. Those who are divisive, sow discord.
   a. Rom. 16:17 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”
b. Tit. 3:10-11 “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”

3. The immoral.
   a. 1 Cor. 5:9,11 “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”
   b. Eph. 5:11 “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove {them}.”

4. Those who walk disorderly; 2 The. 3:6,14 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

III. False Standards Of Unity.
   A. Erroneous teachings.
      1. There is within the Lord’s church today a spirit of ecumenism. “Ecumenism is seeking harmony and peace at the expense of truth.” (Rubel Shelly in the July 1972 issue of *Spiritual Sword*).
      2. All the erroneous teachings are summarized the phrase “unity in diversity”, which is not unity but union.
         a. This was popularized by Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett.
         b. Basically it is even though we do not agree in matters of doctrine, we are to have unity in spite of our differences.
         c. “Fellowship should be understood from its broadest base first, All who are in Christ are in fellowship. We may disagree with a brother, he may be in error on a certain doctrine and still be in `the fellowship.’ This does not mean he is right, or even that he is going to heaven. But if he’s in Christ, he’s in the fellowship.” (Marvin Phillips, *Accept One Another, There Is One Body* Vol. 1 No. 1. (Joplin: 1984).
      3. Ruble Shelley popularized the doctrine of Big “F” and little “f” fellowship.
      4. Others have taught a fellowship in “gospel” but “doctrine” is not important.
   B. Results of these teachings.
      1. Caused churches and preachers to ignore instrumental music.
         a. Rubel Shelly said, “If I were in a congregation where the will of that congregation, the decision of the elders was that the instrument was going to be used next week, I wouldn’t mount the pulpit and condemn them and divide the church” (*Unity Forum*, Hillsboro, Ohio, 1985).
         b. Jeff Walling said, “I don’t go around the country preaching against instrumental music” (Lecture at *Ozark Christian College*, 1987).
      2. A union with the Christian Church denomination.
         a. Rubel Shelly’s points on how churches of Christ and the Independent Christian Churches should work together. “1. Brethren of goodwill can continue to meet, study the Word, and draw closer to
God and one another....2. Meaningful exchange can take place between the two groups of believers....It would be wonderful to worship together and to have some pulpit exchange....3. We can cooperate in many ways to represent Christ before a community....We need to speak on each other’s lectureships ... We need to exchange speakers.” (Cassette tape of “Restoration Summit Report” Aug. 12, 1984 at the Ashwood Church of Christ.)


3. A fellowship with the denominational world.
   a. “There are sincere, knowledgeable, devout Christians scattered among all the various denominations.” (Speech by Rubel Shelley at Centerville, Tn. 1983).
   b. Joe Glenn speaking at the 2nd Annual Interdenominational Revival (A Revival for Unity in the Body of Christ) on Tues. pm Sept. 10, 1985. On Monday and Wednesday pm two Baptist preachers spoke. It was held at the New Life Cathedral in Wichita Falls, Tx. (while there he sang on the rostrum while the played their instruments of music.
   c. Bill Banowsky preaching in the First United Methodist Church in Ft. Worth, “The most important thing you can do is to keep him (their preacher) on television ... After all, this is just a hospital, and those of you who are enrolled here, who’ve checked in, are in pretty good shape.” (Television channel 11 in Dallas, Ft. Worth; Jan. 6, 1986).
   d. Randy Mayeux at the 21st Annual Youth Minister’s Seminar (Oct. 16-19, 1989) sponsored by Lubbock Christian University said, “I don’t know about you but I hope Billy Graham gets some response when he preaches behind the Iron Curtain.”

4. Things will continue to get worse
   a. Don DeWelt said, “As a direct result off the Forums, we are involved in cooperative efforts and they are increasing” (Tulsa Workshop 1990).
   b. 2 Tim. 3:13 “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”

Conclusion: It is God’s desire for His people to be united. All the while we must realize there must be doctrinal purity. Let us always strive for true unity remembering what Jesus said; Mark 3:24-25 “And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”