

The Unity of the Spirit

The Bond of Peace

By George Davis

Insistence upon doctrinal and creedal unity is the primary reason that the family of God is so divided. The belief that unity can and must be reached through consensus is responsible for the savagery of the inquisition.

How can one contend for righteousness while taking another believers head? Why do we feel that we must contend for truth even to the point of modeling error? Why are we inordinately driven to bring others into our viewpoint, resulting in a myriad of congregations all gathered around their own unique versions of "the truth"? This reveals a gross ignorance of God's way of bring true unity. Yes, I could be in agreement with everyone in the world, if they would just agree with me, but that is not likely to happen. In fact, in the day in which we live, it seems impossible to get two or three to agree on anything.

Years ago I heard Campbell McAlpine tell his story of how God dealt with this matter in his life. The Lord spoke to Campbell and told him to fellowship with another brother who had a totally different doctrinal perspective. He argued with God, even using the scriptures to make his point. "You see Lord, it says right here in Amos 3:3, Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Waiting for the Lord's response, and feeling certain that he had convincingly made his point, Campbell rested his case. The Lord responded to Campbell's bulletproof defense, "I disagree with you on a lot of things."

How is it that God can walk with us even though we fall so short of his glory? If we were to take an accounting today, we would find like Campbell, that God disagrees with us on a good many of things. Why do we withhold from others what God has so graciously extended to us? Though we individually fall short of God's glory we nonetheless expect perfection from each other. God's Holy Spirit is grieved at the untold number of fights spawn from this inordinate ambition to impose our individual perceptions of "the truth" upon others. As for myself, I am not afraid of the truth! It is our opinions regarding the truth which we force upon each other as conditions for fellowship that concerns me. Let us take a closer look at God's means of unity.

In Ephesians 4, Paul makes reference to two different kinds of unity.

- Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (verse 3)
- Till we all come in the unity of the faith. (verse 13)

It is not coincidental that Paul refers to the unity of the spirit first. Without the unity of the Spirit we will never realize the unity of the faith. Historically we have seen many attempts at the unity of the faith, which have all resulted in greater disunity. Evidence of this is strewn throughout our cities in the form of cathedrals, temples, and "church buildings." Truth is not something, which can be realized by mental ascent. According to Paul, Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies. And if any man think that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know (1 Corinthians 8:1-2).

If we cannot love one another, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we will never see the unity of the faith. I am sure we all have seen the damage done by people-imposed, rather than Spirit-wrought unity. Someone gets their feelings hurt because the rest of the group fails to enthusiastically embrace their pet doctrine, so they take their ball and leave

We cannot have truth without a Spirit-wrought revelation of Christ. This is one of those things that simply cannot be known except through experience/encounter. In fact, all truth about Christ remains theory to us until we taste and see. Paul knew that there is no true knowing of truth, without a Spirit-wrought revelation of Christ, and thus he prayed, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him . . ." True knowledge is not the fruit of scholastics; it requires the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Paul knew that there were things, which could only be taught by God, and so he prayed,

That he (God) would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us . . . (Ephesians 3:16-20)

What Paul is referring to here is knowledge which is beyond knowledge. It is to know experientially, what can be known in no other way. It is an experiential communion with Christ. This communion with Christ, manifests itself in a comprehension of love, with all the saints. This is true Spirit wrought unity. We can point to this, but we cannot teach it into existence. We cannot mandate this unity. It is birthed by God in the "inner man." I suspect that we Christians know a lot about things of which, in reality, we know nothing. May we take this to heart, and pray one for another that we might experience together, the only ground of unity, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. To the end, that we might truly be "filled with all the fullness of God"!

God scattered the masses at Babel who were attempting to be unified around a cause other than His. It is the same today. God still scatters every effort to unify by any other means than His Spirit. Denominational churches that are unified around creeds, doctrines and programs are a good example of this. Ironically, their attempts at doctrinal unity are the source of their division. Having rejected the unity of the Spirit, they must be held together purely by the force of human organization. The harder they try to unify on that ground the more divided they become.

In every area of life we place a high premium on expertise. We employ the most experienced mechanics to work on our vehicles. We seek out the most experienced doctors, lawyers, etc. We would never dream of trusting our cars to a mechanic who had only read the manual. Those possessing head knowledge only, may argue freely among themselves until someone who has "been there," "done that," walks into the room. Why? Because the latter knows experientially what the former can only imagine. An expert witness is a person possessing knowledge as the result of experience! John was such a witness.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (1 John.1:1)

May we take on Paul's burden of prayer and commit to pray for one another that God would grant us according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; so that we might, be "rooted and grounded in love," so we can comprehend and know, with all saints, the "love of Christ" in order that WE might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. ([Ephesians 3:20-21](#))

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