

Keeping the Unity of the Spirit

(Ephesians 4:1-3)

Introduction:

1. In Ephesians 4:1-3 some important instructions are given to Christians.
2. In our lesson we are concentrating on the admonition given in vs.3 -- we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit.
3. To accomplish this we must:
 - a. avoid things that prevent unity
 - b. pursue things that promote unity.
4. Let us begin our study by determining . . .

Discussion:

- I. HOW THE LORD FEELS ABOUT UNITY AMONG HIS PEOPLE
 - A. In Psalm 133 David described brethren dwelling together in unity.
 1. (vs.1) Brethren dwelling together in unity is "*good*" and "*pleasant*."
 2. (vs.2) Brethren dwelling together in unity is "*precious*" [compared to the ointment placed on Aaron -- Exodus 30].
 3. (vs.3) Brethren dwelling together in unity is a blessing from God [compared to the dew that comes from above].
 - B. In John 17 Jesus prayed for unity.
 1. (vs.11) Jesus prayed that His apostles would be one.
 2. (vs.20-21) Jesus prayed that all of His followers would be one.
 3. (vs.21b) This kind of unity will have a positive impact upon others.
 - C. In the New Testament letters, the Lord commands His followers to be united (Romans 15:5-6; Philippians 1:27).
 - D. To summarize, we have seen how the Lord feels about unity among His people.
 1. David described it in a beautiful way (Psalm 133).
 2. Jesus prayed for His followers to be united (John 17).
 3. The Lord commands His followers to be united in the epistles.
 - E. Let us turn our attention to several . . .
- II. AREAS IN WHICH THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE TO BE UNITED
 - A. The Lord wants His people to be united in doctrine.
 1. To be the Lord's disciples we must "*continue*" in His Word (John 8:31-32).
 2. To achieve doctrinal unity we must "*rightly divide*" [handle accurately] the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - B. The Lord wants His people to be united in other matters.

1. This is made clear in 1 Corinthians 1:10.
2. To accomplish this we must follow the instructions given in Romans 12:16; 14:19; Ephesians 4:1-3.

C. For our last point, let us consider a few specific . . .

III. HINDRANCES TO UNITY AMONG THE LORD'S PEOPLE

A. Exalting people over Christ

1. This was done in the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11-12).
2. This resulted in strife and division (1 Corinthians 3:3-4).
3. We learn from 1 Corinthians 4:6 how to keep the unity of the Spirit.

B. Murmuring

1. The church in Jerusalem enjoyed a beautiful spirit of unity (Acts 2:44, 46).
2. Later, murmuring threatened to destroy that congregation's unity (Acts 6:1).
3. We learn from Philippians 2:14 how to keep the unity of the Spirit.

C. Loving to have preeminence

1. This problem is mentioned in 3 John 9-10.
2. To keep the unity of the Spirit, we must:
 - a. remember that Christ has all preeminence in the church (Colossians 1:18)
 - b. follow the instructions given in Philippians 2:3-4.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible clearly teaches that Christ wants His people to keep the unity of the Spirit.
2. Let us:
 - a. avoid those things that prevent unity
 - b. pursue those things that promote unity.