

## God Demands Unity Among Brethren

*“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3)*

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### Introduction

This annual fall lectureship conducted by the 39<sup>th</sup> Street congregation in Independence, Missouri, is always on the cutting edge of truth. It is a true-to-the-Bible effort. I am grateful to be part and parcel of it each year.

Unity permeates the Bible in both testaments. However, it is the right kind of unity. Adamant builders of Babel’s tower in Genesis 11 were united but united in a work defiant of God’s authority and expressed wishes that man multiply and replenish the earth. This led to a multiple division of tongues and dialects. They were not going to defy God with impunity. God’s will would stay in the ascendancy.

Unity was imperative between Abram and Lot as well as between the herdsmen of each one (Genesis 13:6ff). Unity was important among Hebrews in Egypt as we see depicted in Exodus 2:13ff. David deemed unity among brethren to be both good and pleasant (Psalms 133:1ff). Some things are pleasant such as sin but not good (Cf. Hebrews 10:25). Other things are good such as medicine but may not be pleasant to the palate. But unity is both good and pleasant. Unity emphasis continues in the rest of the Old Testament and throughout the New Testament as well.

### A Great Question by the Rugged Amos

Amos was from Judah but was commissioned by Jehovah to become an uncompromising prophet to Israel. He was as rugged as the Judaeen hills from which he came. In Amos 3:3 he quizzed the people of the Northern Kingdom with a very provoking query, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” This is a rhetorical question with its own built-in answer. Two cannot be walking companions unless they are in agreement. On a walking trail that goes east and west and vice versa for a full mile, two cannot walk together if one is going east and the other is going west. In religion one cannot walk with God unless he be in agreement with Jehovah God. In Genesis Enoch and Noah both walked with God (5:21-14; 6:9). The great-grandfather and the great grandson could not have walked with God unless both were in agreement with the Heavenly Walker. Likewise, humans cannot walk with each other in religious travel unless they be agreed. In the land of Egypt Moses could not walk with Pharaoh for they were not in agreement. Moses and Balaam could not walk together. One loved righteousness; the other loved the wages of unrighteousness or the hire of wrongdoing. Moses could not walk with Korah, Abiram and Dathan in Numbers 16. They were going different directions than Moses was traveling. Samuel and Saul could not walk together for they were traveling opposite directions. Amos and King Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom could not walk together. One walked the path of piety; the other walked the way of wickedness. Amos and Azariah, priest of Bethel, could not walk together because they were not agreed. Isaiah and Ahaz could not walk together because they were not in agreement. Isaiah 7 makes that patently clear. Jeremiah and Josiah walked together because they both loved

God and His law. Both were reformers. Both wanted Judah and Jerusalem to walk the old paths and listen to the loud trumpet of truth. (Jeremiah 6:16-17). But Jeremiah could not walk with Josiah's three sons—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah—and his grandson—Jehoichin or Coniah. They were not in agreement with the courageous prophet. These four had nothing but open contempt for Jeremiah who was the greatest patron the tottering nation had as its curtain of polity descended with rapidity. If Josiah had lived another 20 or 25 years his three sons and one grandson could no have walked with the just monarch with reformation on his mind. In fact, reformation was a priority with Josiah; it was of no consequence to his descendants at all. They walked a totally different route. Their walk of defiance continued for another 22½ years subsequent to Josiah's demise at the hands of Pharaoh-nechoh.

Amos' peers in the Northern Kingdom were filled with uncontrolled worldliness. They were at ease in Zion and placed trust in the mount of Samaria. They lived in the very lap of luxury. They put afar the evil day of sure reckoning. They invited violence to draw nigh. They ate to the fullest but were spiritually undernourished. They were drinkers and drunkards. Joseph's afflictions did not grieve them at all (Amos 6:1-5). In such spiritual poverty they could not walk with God. They were traveling in a diverse direction from which He was traveling. The only unity they had was in service to Satan. They had sold their souls to the devil and they would sink with him. Certain captivity beckoned and little did they realize how very near it was. It was on their threshold. Assyria would soon be breathing down their backs of insolence and open defiance. They should have listened to the rugged individualist from Judah but they met his message with faces as hard as flint and hearts harder than the rocks that dotted their land. They walked the way of worldliness, immorality and violence. With such a mind set there was no way they could walk with Amos here on earth or with the Lord in heaven.

### **Unity's Emphasis in the New Testament**

Jesus was fully conscious of what disunity does when it erupts. In Mark 3:24-26 He taught that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand and a divided house is destined to flounder and fall. He was refuting in rousing form their stupid allegation that He and Satan were in some sort of unity or in league with each other. They said He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub or the prince of the demons denying defiantly that He did it by divine power. Even the devil recognizes the danger of disunity in his Satanic cause.

It is right to pray for unity among brethren. Jesus did in these words of intense importance,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:20-23).

Unity among brethren is assured when we seek to be one as Father and Son are one. This is unity in precious perfection.

It is right to preach unity among brethren. The religious world aims for union with major differences swept under the rug. We are to preach the type of unity approved by Deity with Their Book Divine.

It is right to plead for unity among brethren. Paul did relative to divisive Corinth. Before giving his plea in 1 Corinthians 1:10ff Paul alluded to Christ in verses 1-9 in repetitious force. What better way could there have been to condition them for his strong plea that they become united again? Paul's plea for their unity is couched in these words of weight, worth and wisdom,

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 division among you; but that ye perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect (vs. 10-17).

The Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul demanded unity among the Corinthians. They were divided and thus condemned by apostolic authority. Party names and a partisan spirit reigned in infamy at Corinth. What they were doing at Corinth was no honor to Paul, Cephas or Apollos and was of grave dishonor to Christ. Before it would have been right to call themselves after Paul, it would have had to be the case that Christ is divided into small particles with each group possessing a particle, that Paul had been crucified for them and that they were baptized by Paul's authority and into a relationship with him. None of these three contingencies was true. Therefore, their divisive spirit stood solidly condemned. Incidentally, Paul was not thankful that so few had been baptized but that he had not done the actual immersing with his own hands lest they advocate that he baptized people into his name. He did not say in this context that Christ sent me not to preach baptism—the denominational dodge on this verse—but that Christ sent him no to baptize. Others could do this and often did. This was surely true at Corinth for Paul mentions baptizing only a selected few and yet Luke says in Acts 18:8 that many of the Corinthians heard, believed and were baptized. The denominational world does not have a passage negating the essentiality of baptism in verse 17 as they have long contended with adamant arrogance.

In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul styled them as carnal and made them walk as men. The same is true of injurious division today. God demands unity among brethren—not sinful, carnal division.

Unity among brethren demands a plan. Paul supplies such in these words of intensity,

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Note the perfected comprehension of the plan. The one body would give us unity of organization. The one Spirit would give us unity of revelation. The one hope would give us unity of desire, aim, expectation and anticipation. The one Lord would give us unity of authority. The one faith would give us unity of doctrine or teaching. The one baptism would give us unity of practice. The one God would give us unity of worship. I once heard John Bannister give these points in a lecture fifty-five years ago at Freed-Hardeman when I was a student there.

The late and lamented Winfred Clark said,

The one God sent the one Lord Jesus Christ who sent the one Spirit who gave us the one system of doctrine or teaching which teaches the one baptism which ushers us into the one body (church) wherein we enjoy the one hope.

### **What Is Needed**

There must be a pattern. It must be God's pattern or the Bible. It must be divided rightly and handled correctly. Brethren must renounce their own will and adhere 100% to the Father's will. Then and only then will there be unity among brethren.

### **Conclusion**

Unity is both good and pleasant. It pleases God, Christ and the Spirit. It makes us one in the Lord. This unity is precious, profitable, powerful and priceless. Let us aim toward it and not be content until such is attained and then maintained.