

UNITED WE STAND

SUMMER NEWSLETTER



PA BIBLE TEACHING FELLOWSHIP

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The Corinthian church was a divided group of Christians. In the first epistle written to them by Paul there is a powerful plea to stand in unity:

1 CORINTHIANS 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.

The English word “divisions” in this verse comes from the Greek word schismata. Although we derive our English word “schism” from this Greek word, it doesn’t so much define differing “parties,” “positions,” “perspectives,” or “factions;” it more properly means “a rip, tear, or rend.” This carries a much more visceral sense in opposition to the separations in the Corinthian church.

PAUL’S PERSONAL PLEA BY THE NAME OF THEIR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THAT THEY STOP RIPPING AND TEARING UP THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST.

Also, the phrase “perfectly joined together” carries a powerful sense. Noted Bible scholar William Barclay described it as “A medical word used of knitting together bones that have been fractured, or joining together a joint that has been dislocated. The disunion is unnatural and must be cured.”

Much like the modern Church, the Corinthians were a diverse group. They contained a myriad of backgrounds, nationalities, cultures, and traditions. With all these personal differences and perspectives, how could such a varied company find commonality? Let alone speak the

UNITED WE STAND

same thing, have no separations, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and same judgment?" The answer is found in the power of the name that Paul beseeched them by: **the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

In fact, and very uniquely, Paul begins 1st Corinthians like no other epistle. He mentions the word "Christ" ten times in the first ten verses. Additionally, he mentions him as "Lord" six times, and notably as "our Lord" five times. So we find in the introduction to a divided church, all ripped and torn into divided factions, a powerful emphasis on the Lord who had made them one.

CHRIST - REFERENCED TEN TIMES IN 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-10

- 1 PAUL IS AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST
- 2 THEY ARE THE SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST JESUS
- 3 CALLED TO BE SAINTS WITH ALL IN EVERY PLACE THAT
HAVE CALLED UPON THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OUR
LORD, BOTH THEIRS AND OURS
- 4 GRACE AND PEACE TO THEM FROM GOD OUR FATHER,
AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
- 5 THE GRACE OF GOD WAS GIVEN TO THEM BY JESUS
CHRIST
- 6 THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST WAS CONFIRMED IN THEM
- 7 THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE COMING OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST
- 8 THEY WILL BE ESTABLISHED, SUSTAINED, AND
GUILTLESS IN THE DAY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
- 9 THEY WERE CALLED INTO THE FELLOWSHIP OF GOD'S
SON, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD
- 10 PAUL ASKS THEM AS HIS BROTHERS BY THE NAME OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

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People find fraternity over all kinds of things. There is no lack of communities that offer some level of kinship, but Christian unity is based on faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Under his lordship, by the power of his name, and in the truth of his gospel, we find the grounds for true and lasting fellowship. In Christ, we stand united.

By flesh, you may find other individuals who share similar interests, perspectives, and loyalties. Be it an alma mater, sports team, or hobby. Many seek a homogenous group of people just like them, a community based on shared commonalities as the saying goes, “birds of a feather flock together.” However, if Jesus Christ is our Lord, even if we found that we had nothing in common by flesh, we’ve been brought to a true and lasting unity by something spiritual. All members fully share in this oneness by a common salvation of faith in Christ. (Jude 3) The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (Romans 10:12) There should be no rifts in the body. (1st Corinthians 12:25) It isn’t a place for factions, partisanship, or discord. Our unity is a spiritual one, bonded together in peace.

EPHESIANS 4:3

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Praise God that we don’t need to make Christian unity. If Jesus Christ is our Lord, then we are already unified by the spirit. However, we do need to protect it. Our enemy is deceitful, and always working to divide. From his moment of introduction in the Garden of Eden, we see him working to divide the fellowship man had with God and with one another.

By his subtly and deception, as that slandering snake in the grass, Satan still continues this day to separate marriages, families, communities, nations, and most importantly the Church of the one body.

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At the time of writing this in the Summer of 2020, I look around and see division everywhere. Both locally and nationally there seems to be no end of sharp controversies, strong stances, and constant shouting. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world more profoundly than any of us would likely have predicted and along with it have come many dividing issues. Many cries for social reform are a national focus and along with it have come many dividing issues. On top of this, around the corner in the Fall looms what potentially could be one of the most charged elections in our time, and along with it have come many dividing issues. These issues are dividing the world. Will we allow them to divide the Church?

ALL OF THESE ISSUES HAVE IMPORTANCE, BUT NEVER IN MY LIFE HAVE I SEEN SO MANY CHRISTIANS SO COMFORTABLE WITH BEING SO DIVIDED AGAINST OTHER CHRISTIANS REGARDING MATTERS THAT ARE NOT ULTIMATELY OUR PURPOSE TOGETHER IN CHRIST.

GALATIANS 5:13 - 15

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty [freedom]; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

In Christ, we are called unto great freedom, but our freedom is not to open up more opportunities for self, **but for the loving service of others.**

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All of the commandments of the old covenant (more than six-hundred of them) addressing the “do’s and don’ts” of all matters of conduct are handled succinctly by one thing: love. Love yields. Love follows after the things that make for peace and edify. Love cares more for others than myself.

However, if we as individual members of the Church of the one body choose instead to use our freedoms for the promotion and service of our own selfishness, then we fall to the level of wild animals, with rabid concerns only for self. No matter what the cost to other people, my opinion, my perspective, my personal judgment matters most. Like ferocious beasts, we will bite and devour one another, and Paul’s warning is severe: take heed! If that kind of activity continues, there soon will be nothing left. Then Satan can sit in a beach chair, put up his feet, and enjoy a cool drink because when Christians bite and devour one another, we are doing his work for him.

Lessons from records in the Bible and reports of Church history bring the same conclusion. The most dangerous losses to the assemblies of God’s people rarely come from external threats, but from wars within. With so many cries for so many worldly causes right now, it is imperative for us to have clarity regarding that which our spiritual unity is based upon: our Lord Jesus Christ.

Without a true acknowledgment of the basis for our Christian fellowship with one another, we will inevitably find ourselves taking stands upon the wrong grounds, fighting with one another, passionate for worldly causes – **RIPPING AND TEARING THE CHURCH OF THE ONE BODY APART JUST AS PAUL PLEADED TO THE CORINTHIANS AGAINST.**

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In these divided times, it is crucial for Christians to stand united in Christ. Does this mean I may no longer have opinions? No, of course not, but it means I care most about Christ. It means I've risen with Christ, I seek things above where Christ sits. (Colossians 3:1) It means this earth and things upon it no longer have my affection. (Colossians 3:2) They are no longer dear to me. They no longer have my heart. It means Christ is my life and when he appears, so will I in glory! (Colossians 3:3)

When personal opinions have supplanted the cause of the gospel of Christ, is when we will find ourselves biting and devouring one another just as Paul warned the Galatians against.

Paul appealed to the Corinthians to be joined together by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ because the Church of his body is the only true and lasting way that mankind can be unified. His kingdom and calling bring reconciliation to otherwise irreconcilable parties. United under his lordship, spiritual unity is bonded in peace, bridging together all peoples with all of our individual differences. Crossing all barriers of society, nationality, politics, philosophy, tradition, economy, education, gender, race, and even time: Christians are unified, standing in Christ.

CHRISTIANS ARE UNIFIED, STANDING IN CHRIST.

The Church of Christ's body is similar to a choir. A choir is not one soloist, but an ensemble led by one conductor. The conductor sets the tempo, executes clear direction, and listens carefully to shape the sound of the song. A choir isn't made up of only one type of voice but many. There may be soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and other kinds of voices, but all eyes are on the conductor. Unified by the conductor's leading, all of those different performers singing with their various voices doesn't create confusion, chaos, or dissonance.

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It forms something beautiful - **harmony**.

In the book of Revelation, John was shown quite a varied group of singers united to sing that the Lamb (Jesus Christ) alone is worthy:

REVELATION 5:8 - 9 ESV

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Jesus Christ, by his own blood, has ransomed individuals for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

As Adam was a beginning of man, so also is Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God. He is the Son of Man. Under, by, and in him is the true and eternal means for the unification of every kind of person.

A view of eternity helps to keep current concerns in their proper perspective. As divided as 2020 seems, we won't be divided then. Our Lord is coming to gather us together unto him¹. From that moment forward into endless time, “so shall we ever be with the Lord².” Do you think at that time, when we've been changed to be like him³, when we have spiritual bodies⁴, and know even as we are known⁵ that we will still be biting and devouring one another over earthly issues?

1 - 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1

4 - 1 CORINTHIANS 15:44

2 - 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17

5 - 1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

3 - 1 JOHN 3:2

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DO YOU THINK OUR HEAVENLY FELLOWSHIP WILL BE PUT IN JEOPARDY BECAUSE OF PRESENT OPINIONS?

DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE ISSUES OF STRIFE AMONG US CONCERNING CURRENT EVENTS IN ETERNITY?

DO YOU THINK IN OUR NEW SPIRITUAL BODIES WE'LL STAND IN DIFFERENT ASSEMBLIES BASED ON OUR STANCES REGARDING RECENT CONTROVERSIES?

THEN WHY WOULD WE ALLOW THEM TO DIVIDE US NOW?

JOHN 17:16 - 22

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

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

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God and His Son were unified as one in heart and purpose for the redemption of mankind. The prayer of our Lord in some of his last hours was for us to join in the same. Sent into this world, but not of it. Sanctified by truth. United as one. So that the world would see the Church accomplishing something that flesh will never achieve. People of all kinds brought to true oneness by what he accomplished for us and in us.

Why did he pray to the Father for us to be one in them? So “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” So that men of this divided world would see the Church united together by a spiritual bond of peace. So that they also would believe in the Son who was sent to save them. So that they become individual members of the Church of his body. So that they are added to the ransomed host from every tribe and language and people and nation. So that they might lift up with one mind and one mouth the glories of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 15:5 - 6

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With so many of these charged issues in our nation right now, the options are often presented as only binary. The rhetoric is “You’re either for us or against us.” For those in Christ, it’s not a matter of “us and them.” We are in a higher category altogether. Let’s allow matters of opinion to remain in matters of opinion. You have yours and I have mine. We aren’t called to be likeminded in matters of personal views – that will only lead to divisions. The antidote to any division is exactly as Paul wrote to the Corinthians – Jesus Christ, and his lordship over the church of his one body.

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We are called to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. In him, we find our commonality. In his gospel, we have our grounds for fellowship. In our Savior, we are one. So that, with one mind and one mouth we give glory to God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are seated together in the heavenlies. May no worldly controversies divide us here.

IN CHRIST, WE STAND UNITED.

TUESDAY STUDY NIGHT

7:30PM

ZOOM ID: 180-268-392

**FRIDAY FRIDAY NIGHT
FELLOWSHIP**

7:30PM

ZOOM ID: 281-804-030

**SUNDAY SUNDAY MORNING
FELLOWSHIP**

10:30 AM

ZOOM ID: 109-514-326



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