

The University Heights Messenger

December 5, 2010

Barriers To Unity

By Irvin Himmel

Scriptural unity is much to be desired among God's people. It is sweet and refreshing (Ps. 133). It affects our influence in persuading the world that Jesus is the Son of God. There are some obstructions which stand in the way of unity. Please stop and think about some of them.

Desire for prestige. One's faithfulness may make him outstanding in the eyes of others. Judas and Silas were "chief men among the brethren", that is, they were leading men (Acts 15:22). James, Cephas, and John "seemed to be pillars" (Galatians 2:9). It is not wrong for a person to develop and possess the qualities that make for greatness. Frank Puckett once remarked concerning W. Curtis Porter, "He was a great man but didn't know it." Truly great men do not look upon themselves as being great, and their humility is a part of the reason for their being widely known and esteemed.

It is a love of prestige, prominence, and distinction that makes one discordant. This was the case with Diotrophes who is mentioned in John's letter to Gaius (3 John 9-10). Diotrophes loved to be in control. He craved dominance. He gloried in preeminence. That translates into him being a church boss. His actions were a hindrance to unity. Today, there are people who want to be in a position of widely recognized importance. They covet exalted rank. They imagine themselves as being a couple of notches higher than their peers. From their elevated position they sit in judgment on others, often accusing, vilifying, and defaming. It is hard for an inflated person to be charitable toward others.

Selfishness. Some in the family of God show more interest in pleasing self than in

pleasing the heavenly Father. The attitude of Jesus was "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29).

Holy Scripture teaches us to be considerate of others. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1). To avoid schism in the body, "the members should have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:25). Selfishness makes people inconsiderate. Those who are self-centered often insist on having their own way rather than yielding to others. They are unwilling to esteem others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3-5).

Factionalism. This was a chief cause of division in the church at Corinth. "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" (1 Corinthians 1:12). This divisive spirit reflected carnality (1 Corinthians 3:3-4). The Corinthians needed to learn "not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another" (1 Corinthians 4:6).

The party spirit is loyalty to a man (or group) rather than devotion to Christ. Partisan effort is often confused with zeal for the Lord. One may deceive himself into thinking that he is working to build up the body of Christ when in reality he is striving to build up a faction. A heretic is one who leads a faction and the Bible says, "A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3:10). Some who are the most militant supporters of a faction never miss an opportunity to label others as partisan in their views. A factional spirit is one of divisiveness. One does not rid himself of such a spirit by accusing others of being schismatics.

Lack of brotherly love. Backbiting,

bickering, spreading malicious rumors and lies, displaying envy, and similiar actions show that love is absent. Some brethren act toward others in the most “unbrotherly” manner imagineable. The “golden rule” (Matthew 7:12) has never made much of an impression on their hearts. Their words and deeds exhibit an attitude of bitterness and contempt.

As brethren in the Lord, we are exhorted, “Let brotherly love continue” (Hebrews 13:1). “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another” (Romans 12:10). Jesus taught His followers, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Brethen who have genuine love for each other will work diligently to resolve differences rather than dividing asunder. Love prevents impugning motives. Love deters the use of ugly insinuations.

To maintain the unity of the Spirit we must destroy the barriers that block harmony and agreement. Those who erect such obstructions bear responsibility for the resulting disunity.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

Jim Edwards had a stint put in.

Jeff Howerton continues to deal with infections at Cardinal Hill. He hopes to be discharged by the 15th. Calls, cards, and visits are welcomed.

Let us remember the **Harrod family** after the loss of Louis’s brother. Also the **Erickson family** after the death of the father in law of Neal’s uncle.

Our members: **Glenn Davis, Glenn Kimberlin, Janet Brundige**

Others: **Vera Howerton, Robin Miller, Ann Sego, John Bennett, Dennis Brennan, Sara Phillips, Robert and Sarah Brundige, Kay Montgomery, Donald Dawson, Jean Gartland, Wes Kidd, Gail Stein, Shannon Gilbert, Chuck McDavitt**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Streaming Bible study every Tuesday at 7. This time Mark Wallace and I will pick up at Mark 4:21. Please remember to tell people about this effort.

BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sunday: Jer 33-34, Ps 115, 1 Cor 8-9
Monday: Jer 35-36, Ps 116, 1 Cor 10
Tuesday: Jer 37-38, Ps 117, 1 Cor 11
Wednesday: Jer 39-41, Ps 118, 1 Cor 12-13
Thursday: Jer 42-44, Ps 119:1-8, 1 Cor 14
Friday: Jer 45-47, Ps 119:9-16, 1 Cor 15-16
Saturday: Jer 48, Ps 119:17-24, 2 Cor 1-2

SERMON TOPICS:

Sunday AM. “I Appeal To You...” 2
(1 Corinthians 4:14-16)

Sunday PM. The Salt Of The Earth
(Matthew 5:13)