

## God is Our Unity

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### Understanding Our Text

#### 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NASB)

[4] Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit. [5] And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. [6] There are varieties of **effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons. [7] But to each one is given the **manifestation** of the Spirit for the common good. [8] For to one is given the word of **wisdom** through the Spirit, and to another the word of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit; [9] to another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of **healing** by the one Spirit, [10] and to another the effecting of **miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing** of spirits, to another various kinds of **tongues**, and to another the **interpretation** of tongues. [11] But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just **as He wills**.

In our text Paul speaks of variety; varieties of gifts, varieties of ministries, and varieties of effects. This communicates to us the recognition of the uniqueness of each of God's creatures. We have been talking about how God created us as unique individuals for different functions in His Body the Church. God created a great deal of variety in His universe, and in mankind the crown of His creation. We are truly unique. However, our sermon title today is, *God is Our Unity*. If the topic at hand is unity why would I choose a text that speaks to the variety that God made? When we think of all of the variety that God created and brought into service in His Kingdom, it is hard to connect the dots from that variety to the Uncompromising Unity that He demands in His Kingdom. A proper understanding of Christian Unity connects the dots for us, especially as we look at our text for today. Our text will be more clearly understood in the larger context of some other Scripture passages.

#### A Biblical Perspective on Christian Unity:

I want to read to you a few paragraphs from an article that comes from a Seventh Day Adventist website. This link is available in this manuscript on our sermons webpage.

(<http://pw1.netcom.com/~crmin/csdachurch/unity.html>) The author of the article is unknown but there are some very important truths about what Christian unity is and is not.

In studying Christian Unity for what it really is, it will be helpful first of all plainly to state what it is not.

Uniting of Christians upon doctrine, is not Christian Unity. Agreement of Christians in belief, is not Christian Unity. Uniting or agreeing of Christians upon a platform or statement of belief, or of doctrine, or of principles, is not Christian Unity. Uniting of Christians in an agreed assent and submission to an order of church organization or church government, is not Christian Unity. Union of purpose or of effort of Christians or among Christians in promoting a cause, is not Christian Unity. Free and pleasant fraternal association of Christians, is not Christian Unity.

Christians might have all of these things in one combination, indeed many of them do, and yet *do* not have Christian Unity at all. Christian Unity is far more and far higher than is any association of denomination or federation or council even of all the Christians in the world for any purpose or upon any platform or in any cause or in submission to any church government. *Christian Unity* is so well worth having that it is worth more than all other things put together.

Then the author of this article on Christian Unity quotes some of the early reformers and several passages of Scripture to make the point clear.

**Matthias** (a Lutheran reformer) said (of Christian Unity): "The Body of the omnipotent and altogether indivisible Jesus Christ, the community of saints, is not divided, neither indeed can be divided. That Church, by virtue of its eternal and immutable unity, depends wholly on the unity of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of His Spirit. It is Jesus Christ Himself, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever **dwells in His Church** and in each most insignificant portion of it, holding together, vitalizing, sustaining, the whole and all its parts. Bound with each other in the unity of the life of Jesus, many shall come together and be held in union by the cords of a glowing love."

**John Huss** (A Catholic reformer that paved the way for the Protestant reformation.) said (of Christian Unity): "Christ alone is the all-sufficient Head of The Church. The Church needs no other. And therein consists its unity. All true unity must have its foundation in Christ."

Christian unity is nothing less, and is nothing else, than the divine unity itself: "the unity of the Spirit." Note that it is not unity from the Spirit. That is, it is not a unity of people, derived from the Spirit. Nor is it, primarily, a unity caused among people by their possessing the Spirit. It is "The unity OF the Spirit" Himself.

Christian unity, then, is only the divine unity... See this in the Scriptures of Truth, where the Reformers found it; for there it is plainly and repeatedly stated. First, in the Savior's promise of the Comforter:

#### **John 14:16-20 (NASB)**

[16] "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; [17] that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

[18] "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. [19] "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. [20] "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

There is Christian unity. There is "the unity of the Spirit." It is the unity of the individual Christian with, and in, the Father and the Son:

#### **John 17:20-26 (NASB)** (Jesus prayer for His disciples the night He was arrested.)

[20] "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; [21] **that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You**, that **they also may be in Us**, so **that the world may believe that You sent Me**.

[22] "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, **that they may be one**, just as We are one; [23] **I in them and You in Me**, that they may be **perfected in unity**, so **that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them**, even as You have loved Me. [24] "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

[25] "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; [26] and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, **so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.**"

Three times in direct connection, there stands expressed by the Lord Jesus His own thought of Christian unity. Three times He tells how it is to be found; and every time, without a scintilla of

variation, this Christian unity which He defined and for which He prayed for us, finds its key, its spring, its idea, only in unity with the Father and with the Son, in the very unity of the Father and the Son. **That, and that alone, is Christian unity.**

Christian unity then is nothing less and nothing else than the divine unity itself, as that unity is in the very Godhead. The unity of the Godhead is the unity of Spirit, in the Spirit; for the Godhead is only Spirit. And all who "have been made to drink into this one Spirit," of the "one Lord," through the "one faith" of the "one Christ", and of the "one God and Father of all"; and who are possessed of this "one Spirit"; and "live" and "walk" "in the Spirit":-- all these are one in Him and with Him in the very "unity of the Spirit," which is the divine unity itself.

I wish I could read this entire article to you this morning but time does not allow for that. Go to the link on our sermons webpage, the link is in the manuscript for today's sermon. So how does our text fit in here? Let's look at our text again. There is a word in that text that is repeated over and over again that shows us this unity. It is the word *same*.

In our text we see all of this variety and the uniqueness's of individuals, coming together in unity, by the presence and working of God in each and every situation and individual. If God is not the central thing, the working power, in every gift, ministry, and effect, then unity will be impossible. As God is allowed to be central and the working power in the uniqueness and variety in His Kingdom, there is Uncompromising Unity.

### 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NASB)

[4] Now there are varieties (DIVERSITY) of **gifts**, (results of grace) but the same Spirit (UNITY).

**Gifts** – We have talked about the word gifts before, it is the Greek word charisma g5486 (**CWS-NT**) *it is* A gift of grace, an undeserved benefit. The suffix *-ma*, indicates the result of grace. In the NT *it is* used only of gifts and graces imparted from God... *These gifts are something we have only as a result of God's grace.*

[5] And there are varieties (DIVERSITY) of **ministries**, and the same Lord (UNITY).

[6] There are varieties (DIVERSITY) of **effects** (In the NT, *effects is* used only in 1Co 12:6,10 *and it speaks* of the results of the energy of God in the believer. **CWS-NT**), **but the same God who works all things in all persons** (UNITY).

[7] But to each one (DIVERSITY) is given the **manifestation** (A manifestation makes something visible or observable. *In other words it is the Spirit that makes the gifts, ministries, and effects visible or observable.*) of the Spirit (UNITY) **for the common good.** (UNITY)

[8] For to one (DIVERSITY) is given the word of **wisdom** through the Spirit (UNITY), and to another (DIVERSITY) the word of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit (UNITY); [9] to another (DIVERSITY) **faith** by the same Spirit (UNITY), and to another (DIVERSITY) gifts of **healing** by the one Spirit (UNITY), [10] and to another (DIVERSITY) the effecting of **miracles**, and to another (DIVERSITY) **prophecy**, and to another (DIVERSITY) the **distinguishing** of spirits, to another (DIVERSITY) various kinds of **tongues**, and to another (DIVERSITY) the **interpretation** of tongues. [11] But one and the same Spirit works all these things (UNITY, the Spirit brings the diversity together in unity for the purposes of His Eternal Kingdom), distributing to each one individually (DIVERSITY) **just as He wills.**

Look at how Paul ties this variety to, and shows its place in, the unity of the body of Christ.

- DIVERSITY – UNITY
- Varieties of gifts – in the same Spirit
- Varieties of ministries – in the same Lord
- Varieties of effects – in the same God
- Manifestations – of the Spirit

- Wisdom – through the Spirit
- Knowledge – in the same Spirit
- Faith – by the same Spirit
- Healing – by the one Spirit
- Miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, languages, interpretation of languages – BUT ONE AND THE SAME SPIRIT WORKS ALL THESE THINGS... JUST AS HE WILLS.
- DIVERSITY – UNITY: Diversity and variety is brought into Unity by the power of God.

What is the one common thing in each of these phrases? It is the presence and unity of Almighty God. It is only in being in relationship with God that Uncompromising Unity becomes possible. This is what it means to answer the call Jesus gives, “come and follow me.”

To be in the Father, Son, and Spirit is to accept God’s love for us and to love God in return. That brings us to God’s demand for Uncompromising Unity.

### God’s Demand for Uncompromising Unity:

I guess for me the scripture portion that sets this idea of *Uncompromising Unity* in stone, is found in Romans 1:20.

#### Romans 1:20 (NASB)

[20] For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Now I know that at first sight this verse does not hold much promise in showing the idea of Uncompromising Unity but when we see it in the context of the New Testament it will become clear to us.)

#### NOTES: [Ro 1:20](#)

We often see this verse as speaking about the whole of God's grand creation, the beauty of the universe and the world we live in as the evidence of the existence of God and His love for us. This is truly correct. But if we focus in on God's prize object of creation, man, we see the most powerful witness to his existence and His **love** for the world. This verse speaks of the *Invisible attributes of God*. *The most prevalent attribute of God is LOVE*. If we look carefully at God's plan of **love** for man and through man, we see this Uncompromising Unity very clearly.

It starts with the **love** of man for God. This **love** for God is a natural consequence of God's **love** for man. In fact, in the verses we are about to read there is even a plan to make sure this **love** for God is passed on from generation to generation. Let's look at a few passages that lay out a path of understanding for us.

#### Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NASB) (The Shema)

[4] “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! [5] “You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. [6] “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. [7] You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. [8] “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. [9] “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Love flows out from God into all of humanity, the crown of God's creation.

#### Leviticus 19:18 (NASB)

[18] 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall **love** your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

These two Old Testament verses are the very verses Jesus quoted when asked what the greatest commandment was.

### **Matthew 22:36-40 (NASB)**

[36] "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" [37] And He said to him, " **'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'** [38] "This is the great and foremost commandment. [39] "The second is like it, **'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'** [40] "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Then, as if to make sure that those He had chosen to carry on the Kingdom of God here on earth after He was gone, Jesus gives this principle to His disciples in a very clear way. Jesus wants His closest followers to know that His Kingdom is based on Uncompromising Unity. This scene takes place during the last supper Jesus had with His disciples. Judas has just gone out to betray Jesus to the religious leaders who would crucify Him.

### **John 13:31-35 (NASB)**

[31] Therefore when he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; [32] if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. [33] "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' [34] "A new commandment I give to you, that you **love** one another, even as I have **loved** you, that you also **love** one another. [35] "**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**"

What was it that would show the world that His disciples had truly united with Him? What was it that would show the world that they had an Uncompromising Unity? Their **love** for Him as it would be expressed in their **love** for each other and their **love** for the world. This Uncompromising Unity, expressed in their **love** for each other, is an expression of the **love** God had for them as sinners. This **love**, which brings Uncompromising Unity, is the very foundation of God's plan of salvation. This **love** is the very foundation of the Kingdom of God. A kingdom can only be truly and finally established when there is Uncompromising Unity. Let's look at John 17 again.

### **John 17:20-26 (NASB)**

[20] "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; (that's you and I) [21] **that they may all be one** (UNITY); even as **You, Father, are in Me and I in You**, that **they also may be in Us**, so **that the world may believe that You sent Me.**

[22] "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, **that they may be one** (UNITY), just as We are one; [23] **I in them and You in Me**, that they may be **perfected in unity**, so **that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them**, even as You have loved Me.

[24] "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me (UNITY) where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

[25] "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; [26] and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, **so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.**"

We must bring our uniqueness into the service of the King of kings by an unconditional surrender of self to God. It is one thing to discover your talents. It is quite another thing to develop and use those talents in the service of the King of kings. This surrender is an act of love for God that guarantees Uncompromising Unity, because after surrender, life is no longer about self. After complete surrender life is all about service to the King of kings. Will you take this step? It does not matter what commitments you may have made in the past, this is a new day. Do not justify inaction today by the actions of yesterday. Will you bring the unique individual that God made in you, and surrender it to the King of kings this morning? Will you come into this unity of love in Spirit that promises to change the world you live in? Everyone here this morning is faced with a choice. Will you choose to walk in newness of life or will you just stay where you are?

This sermon is over. The formal part of this service is over. What will you do with what God has revealed to you this morning? Will you meet the King of kings at this altar in a fresh surrender of self, or will you walk out of here the same person you were when you came in here? Come to this altar of surrender before you leave. You are dismissed.

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