

THE CHURCH'S PRIMARY MESSAGE

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To some brethren (evidently more than a few), unity among and between men is the fundamental and primary design of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To the contrary, the fundamental design of the Gospel is to bring men into unity with God. One is not ready to preach the Gospel if that one is going into all the world to unify men. *We go into all the world to get men to walk with God.*

Having stated what the primary purpose of the church via the preaching and defense of the Gospel of Christ is to accomplish, we hasten to add that we are not unmindful of our Lord's prayer for the unity of believers in Christ as the Son of God and their Savior (John 17:20-21). Any Christian desires to see our Lord's prayer for unity of all believers answered.

However, it is useless to seek unity among men simply for the sake of unity. Such an idea is foreign to the Bible. The Gospel is God's power to save men—men who are in need of salvation because they are separated from God by their sins (1 John 3:4; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; 3:23; 6:23; 10:17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 The. 1:8). Thus, the unity that should first, foremost, and always concern every Christian is the reconciliation of men to God through the preaching and defense of the pure unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 4:1-3; John 12:48; Col. 3:17). It is vain to seek unity among men apart from "walking in the light" of God's Truth (1 John 1:7; John 8:31, 32; 17:17; Jude 3). Therefore, whatever causes any member of the church to deviate from the doctrine of Christ, no matter how slight the departure may seem to fallible man, such a departure ruins the ultimate, final, and logical end of the Divine Scheme of Redemption—the salvation of the souls of men.

If, therefore, the unity prayed for by the Christ and commanded by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 1:10), the planks of which are listed in Ephesians chapter four is to be realized, we must learn to put "first things first" or we will get the proverbial "cart before the horse" in the matter of unity and thereby corrupt the whole Divine system of unity (Mat. 6:33).

Without the doctrine of Jesus Christ believed and obeyed, no person can be saved and remain in a saved state with God. Only by a pure Gospel can men find and possess salvation from sin through the blood of Jesus Christ. And, only those who are saved from sin have authority from God to unite with one another—and then unite only on His terms. To seek a "unity" among men apart from the doctrine of Christ is foreign to and against God's Scheme of Redemption. Thus, the Holy Spirit inspired John instructs us to:

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him

God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds
(2 John 8-11).

We, therefore, must teach, believe, practice, and contend for unity with God *first*, which unity comes only through compliance with Christ's doctrine. *Only* by such compliance with the doctrine of Christ is the unity for which Christ prayed and Paul commanded obtained and perpetuated. ~