

THE ONENESS OF CHRIST

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"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. 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?" I Corinthians 1:10, 12, 13.

These are deep and comprehensive verses. They are marvelously full of truth and power. We do well to ponder them carefully. They contain the burden of the word of this epistle - the oneness of Christ. Here we see at once five fundamental "ones";

First : One Name - "the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Second: One Word, the whole Truth - "speak the same thing."

Third: One Body - "no divisions among you."

Fourth: One Mind - "the mind of Christ" - I Corinthians 2:16

Fifth: One judgment - "the same judgment."

This is a universal epistle. It was not addressed to the assembly at Corinth only. It is "unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" - I Cor. 1:2. Thus, it reaches down to us today. How astonishing that these burning words should stand at the very threshold of this letter. Why? Because of the ignorance and neglect of the doctrine of the oneness of Christ. Again and again in this letter, by a great variety of expressions, this truth is held before us.

Observe that this entreaty of the apostle is by "the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Anointed)." His Name is One - Zechariah 14:9. There is "one Lord" - Eph. 4:5. There is not "another Jesus" - II Cor. 11:4. There is only one Christ - "the Anointed One" - Acts 2:30-36. In his first Spirit-filled message, Peter exclaims - "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Anointed One)" - Acts 2:36. Ever since that thrilling announcement, the threefold Name - "the Lord Jesus Christ" - deserves and demands the respect of men and angels and demons. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" - Acts 4:12. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" - Phil. 2:9-11. Then at least fourteen years later, at a conference of apostles and elders in Jerusalem, Simeon "declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name" - Acts 15:14. Hence, we constantly meet this wondrous Name - "Lord Jesus Christ" - throughout the epistles.

Through the worthiness, fullness, and oneness of this Name, the Holy Spirit pleads with us to maintain the oneness of the Christ. "Is Christ divided?" Nay! "For as the body (our physical body) is one, and hath many members ... so also is Christ (the Anointed One)" - I Cor. 12:12. As Christ is one and His Name is one, so the Body of Christ is one and its name is one with Him. Christ in the glory together with the Christians - His people on earth - are here termed "the Christ." "Seeing that we, who are many, are one bread (loaf), one body: for we all partake of the one bread (loaf)" - I Cor. 10:17 R.V. "Now ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular" - I Cor. 12:27. "The Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" - Eph. 1:22, 23. "He is the Head of the Body, the Church" - Col. 1:18. As the Head of this glorious Body is called "Christ" or "Anointed One," so its members are called "Christians" or "anointed ones." "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" - Acts 11:26. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" - I Peter 4:16. This is the only becoming, logical, and Scriptural name for believers on Jesus.

THE ONENESS OF CHRIST BROKEN

There is no logical excuse or Scriptural ground for calling ourselves "Methodists," or "Presbyterians," or "Holiness People," or "Apostolic Faith Missions," or "Pentecost Bands," or any other man-given title. This is all of the flesh, and it stinks to God. "For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" Further, building on Christ under any human name, the apostle terms building "wood, hay, stubble" which will be burned. This builder shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved - "yet so as by fire." Such carnal building corrupts the temple of God. "Know ye not that ye (all believers) are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man corrupt the temple of God, him shall God bring to corruption; for the temple of God, which ye are, is holy" - I Cor. 3:3, 4, 12, 15-17.

In I Corinthians five is recorded a most solemn illustration or proof of these facts just stated in chapter three. Six most prominent forms of wickedness, which result from not holding the oneness of Christ, are named - fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness, and extortion. The first named is used as a sample. But, I would have you see, that this man's conduct is recorded here as a type of a deeper spiritual fornication which is much more obnoxious to God than that in the natural. This is why so much detailed attention is given to his case in both these epistles. This deeper spiritual fornication, or separation from Christ, is brought out in power in I Corinthians 6:13-20.

Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is emphasizing the oneness of Christ, and illustrating the cause and manner of diverting therefrom. "The Body," the Church of Christ, "is not for fornication," or separation, "but for the Lord." It is not for any other head. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" - II Cor. 11:2. "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me" - Song of Solomon 7:10. Christ, the Head of the Church, is wholly for her. He cannot be turned from His devotion to her. He is entirely sufficient in wisdom and strength for His Body. What folly then to depend upon any man of flesh.

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members

of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" - I Corinthians 6:15-17.

The fornicator in I Corinthians five represents the man who dares to assume the headship of Christ' s Body, or of a part of it, by accepting human offices as pope, cardinal, bishop of a diocese, president, superintendent, or moderator. That man took his father' s wife; that is, he took a headship not belonging to him. He separated the wife from her rightful head. He committed fornication. So, when men accept the headship of any part of Christ' s Body, they commit spiritual fornication; and they cause those people to commit harlotry because they divert more or less from Christ. The people are caused to depend upon men and institutions and organizations, just as the wife of that father accepted the support of his son. In Revelation 17:5 we read of "the mother of harlots."

WHO ARE THE DAUGHTERS?

This is a most solemn question. Christian people generally do not care to know the answer. Consider what God says: "He which is joined to an harlot is one body. For two, saith He, shall be one flesh." Exactly so we find it. People say, "Our church," meaning their denomination. Another says, "I am a Methodist." Another, "I belong to the Pentecostal people." They are "one body." The Methodists are one body. The Catholics are one body. The Presbyterians are one body, and so forth. Now you must subscribe to the teaching and polity of these sects, or they will not fellowship you. The primary question is not, "Do you accept Christ as your Saviour?" But, "Do you believe this and that? Do you agree with us?" We say it tenderly, yet with an aching heart, but we must declare it: The so-called Latter Rain Movement has gone in the same direction. What is the meaning of the various organizations now existing? What must we conclude from the attempted circumscriptions, tenets of faith, bylaws, human titles, honorary offices, places of eminence, and attempts at regulation by organization? Will we not learn by the failures and follies of our ancestors?

What man has ever yet succeeded in putting the Church right? Who has ever yet solved the missionary problem, and set the missionaries and the missionary operations in equilibrium? Who is able to do so? God is moving. We should move with Him, not with any sect. The Church order is already set, by Paul' s first epistle to the Corinthians; but some fail to accept it. The missionary problem is already solved; but it does not suit all. Christ is the glorious and all-sufficient Head of the Church. We are but "servants," "prophets," "teachers," "helpers," "labourers together with God," "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God," and "the household of faith." Christ is the Director and Regulator. We can but act at His command. When men attempt to regulate the irregular, they assume the office of the Regulator Himself; and they presently relegate Him from the field.

Is it not a demon possession? Is not this itching for headship and lordship and leadership "another spirit"? If not, why are demons mentioned in connection with the Lord' s table? - I Cor. 10:16-22. If sectarianism is not due to demon delusion, why is it that those who are once in its coils can scarcely get loose from it? Why is it the most rending separation? Why do saints compromise and reject light, rather than go "unto Him without the camp,

bearing His reproach"? The time is on us when we will suffer reproach again, or join some human organization which claims to be filled with and led by the Holy Spirit. Brother, which will it be?

EIGHT SYMBOLS OF THE CHURCH

These are: "God' s husbandry," or farm. "God' s building," "temple," or "house." "The flock of God." "Branches" of "the Vine." "One Body." "The household of God." "The household of faith." "One bread," or "loaf." "A chaste virgin." Every one of these implies helplessness and absolute dependence upon another. Not one of these can help itself, or protect itself, or regulate itself, or improve its condition.

The farm must yield to the Farmer' s sowing and cultivation; then there will be a harvest for Him. The building yields to the Owner' s gathering of materials, plans, and specifications; and to its erection in His time and order, and to His indwelling and control. The flock yields to the Shepherd' s care, sheltering, feeding, and shearing. The branches have but to abide in the Vine, and draw life and health therefrom; then they will bear much fruit. The one bread, or loaf, is perpetuated only by partaking of that One Bread which is Christ. It is utterly dependent upon Him. Otherwise, it becomes stale and musty. Are not many believers in a stale condition?

The Body is directed by and keeps in harmony with its Head. The members of my body cannot care for nor regulate one another independently of my head. My feet cannot support nor walk me, my hand cannot scratch my chin, my eye cannot see for the body, except by the direction of my head. Neither can they fill one another' s functions. If they attempted it, there would be confusion and wreckage. Suppose the members of my body attempt to organize, by electing my right eye as president, my left eye as vice-president, my right hand as secretary and treasurer, and my feet as a financial committee. They would be acting independently of my head.

The Church, the Body of the Anointed One, constituted of many members is "one Body" and absolutely dependent upon Christ her living Head. He is her Wisdom, her Righteousness, her Life, her Strength, her Direction, her Glory, and her Goal. How very foolish to attempt to organize this wondrous organism.

The household, also, is wholly dependent upon the Householder. He must furnish everything, direct or dictator, confusion ensues. Even the housewife does not presume to be head. A household can have but one head. "The household of faith" has but one Head, even Christ. Faith in Him holds it together.

Lastly, we see the woman, or "chaste virgin." What a beautiful, perfect, and glorious symbol of the Bride of Christ! She is dependent upon her Husband for her food, clothing, and shelter. She loves Him as her Head, respects Him as superior to her, confides in Him as the only One to be really trusted, and rests upon His arm as the one altogether sufficient.

"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." How few really believe that fact. We seem to forget that we are "a new creation," "a spiritual house," "a special treasure"; that we "are not of the world, but ... chosen ... out of the world"; that our "life is hid with Christ in

God"; that we are not to be "conformed to this world (age)" in any sense - not to the religious customs. We seem to forget that we are seated "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (not of the flesh), and that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." It seems that spiritual realities are not real to most of us, or we would not try to bring them down to carnal planes and try to make the move in carnal grooves. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." If actually joined, then we are actually one spirit. The life that is in the branches is the same as that in the Vine. The life in the sons of God is the same as that in the Son of God. "I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." This is a spiritual union by a spiritual birth, resulting in a spiritual people to be governed by the one Spirit at the direction of the one Head.

WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK?

The outlook to sense is deplorable and despairing; but to faith it is victorious and glorious. As God used Deborah and Jael to deliver Israel from the nations to whom He delivered them for the destruction of the flesh; so He designs to use those who accept the spirit of Paul and the Truth of God that he taught to deliver the Church today. That fornicator, in I Corinthians five, was delivered "unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." Had he seen the flesh destroyed on the Cross in the death of Christ, he would never have had to pass through that disgraceful ordeal. People who really see and accept their identification with Christ and maintain it, have real victory over all forms of the flesh life. These are they who, "in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ," do "deliver" the carnal "unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." Thus, the spirit of the fleshly believer will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" - John 6:39. He will save some "as by fire," but He will save them. How was that man turned unto Satan? They put him away from their fellowship - I Cor. 5:13. Thus, the divine protection was lifted. That proved a sufficient punishment, or censure - II Cor. 2:6. In what manner, or how severely, Satan tumbled him about is not said; but the remedy was effectual. The flesh was counted as destroyed; he repented - II Cor. 2:1-11. We cannot fellowship or keep company with the flesh. We dare not endorse it.

Only as we come into deepest sympathy with the heart and will and plans and hopes of Jesus our Lord, by sitting at His feet as did Mary and hearing His Word and by searching as for hid treasure in His Word, can we help them. Thereby, we have a profound pity for our brethren, even like Paul who "out of much affliction and anguish of heart ... wrote ... with many tears" to the saints at Corinth - II Cor. 2:4. Only with this unswerving loyalty to and sympathy with Christ and His unbounded tenderness toward all God's people everywhere as our people can we thus deliver them to Satan, and thus by faith recover them to Christ. Perhaps thus "we may present every man (every believer) perfect in Christ Jesus" - Colossians 1:28.