

Introduction

1. Text: **1 Cor. 1:1-3**. Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 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 their's and our's: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus prayed that those who would believe in Him might be "one."
 - a. **Jn. 17:20-21**. 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.
3. The division that is so apparent in the religious world cannot be anything but displeasing to Him.
 - a. **1 Cor. 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.
 - b. **Eph. 4:1-6**. I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

I. HOW DID THE PRESENT DIVIDED STATE OF "CHRISTENDOM" COME ABOUT?

- A. In the New Testament, there were no groups of congregations distinguished by distinctive doctrines and practices.
- B. The congregations that existed were simply the "churches of Christ" (**Rom. 16:16**). Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.
- C. Is it not obvious that if nothing had been changed we would still have the unity we read about in the New Testament?
- D. But changes did take place -- and these departures from the faith were predicted by the apostles of Christ even before the New Testament period came to a close.
 1. **2 Tim. 4:3-4** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.
 2. **1 Tim. 4:1-2**. Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

II. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO RECOVER THE UNITY THE LORD PRAYED FOR?

- A. If we got rid of the cause of the division, would we not get rid of the division itself?
1. If the present division is the result of additions, subtractions, and modifications to the Lord's teaching, would we not be able to have unity if these changes were eliminated?
 2. Could we not get back to Christianity as it was in the New Testament if we went back to the teaching of the New Testament?
- B. The word of God is like "seed" (**Lk. 8:11**) Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. -- and one characteristic of seed is that it always produces after its kind.
1. Other religious teachings are also like seed, producing after their kind.
 - a. The **Roman Catholic Catechism** will always produce a Catholic.
 - b. The **Augsburg Confession** will always produce a Lutheran.
 - c. The **Book of Mormon** will always produce a Mormon.
 - d. The **Book of Common Prayer** will always produce an Episcopalian.
 - e. The **Methodist Discipline** will always produce a Methodist.
 - f. The **Baptist Manual** will always produce a Baptist.
 2. The **Methodist Discipline** will never produce a Baptist, and the Baptist Manual will never produce a Methodist.
 3. If the only "seed" sown was the New Testament, what would result?
 4. Because seed always produces after its kind, the only thing that could possibly be produced by the New Testament is a Christian -- nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else!

III. WHAT IS THE "CHURCH OF CHRIST"?

- A. In truth, the "church of Christ" is not a denomination -- it is merely the church that "belongs to" Christ, the Lord.
1. **Mt. 16:18.** And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build *my* church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
 2. **Rom. 16:16.** "The churches of Christ salute you."
- B. Those who make up the Lord's church are not members of any denomination -- they are simply His disciples who wear His name.
1. **Ac. 11:26.** And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
 2. **Ac. 26:28.** Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.
- C. In the New Testament, Christians were not any denominational "kind" of Christian -- they were merely the Lord's people, His by virtue of having obeyed His gospel and received the forgiveness of their sins.

1. **1 Cor. 1:2.** 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 their's and our's:
 2. **Eph. 5:23-30. (read)**
- D. Jesus warned about adding to His word.
1. **Mt. 15:13.** But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.
 2. **1 Cor. 4:6.** And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.
 3. **Col. 3:17.** And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.
 4. **Rev. 22:18-19.** For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.
 5. If a person wanted to be a member of a denomination, one would be as good as another -- because the thing denominations have in common is that they are all human in origin.
 6. But just as was true in the New Testament, a genuine Christian today is not a member of any denomination -- he/she is nothing other than a faithful disciple of the Lord!

Conclusion:

- A. Jesus clearly specified what must be done to be saved from our sins.
 - a. Hear, Believe, Repent, Confess, Be baptized, Live faithfully
- B. When we do the things that Jesus required to be saved, we are added by Him to His church
 - a. **Ac. 2:38- 47.** (read)
- C. As long as we believe and practice only the Lord's will, we will be the Lord's church - -and nothing else.
- D. But if we ever get outside the boundaries of the Lord's will, we will have severed our relationship to Him:
 - a. **2 Jn. 9-11.** 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
 - b. NOTICE :anyone not in the true doctrine of Christ is doing evil.
- E. Would you be a member of the church that belongs to Christ?